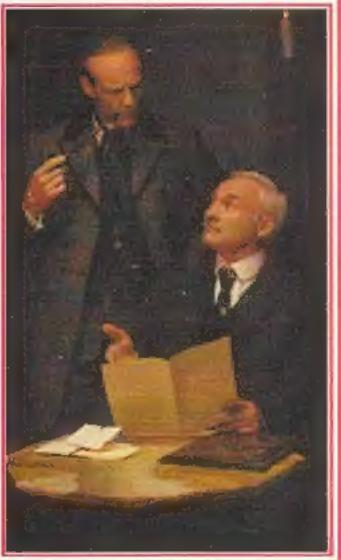


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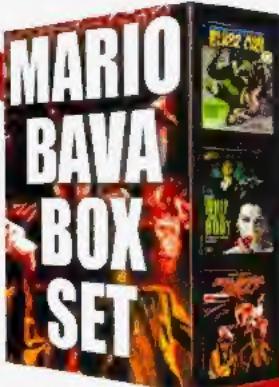
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Scarlet Letters

I've been playing catch up with some of your back issues, and although I enjoy reading every page, I was particularly happy to see a long-overdue interview with actress/playwright/stage manager/director/author/etc. etc. etc. Kathleen Freeman (*Scarlet Street* #38 and #39).

Which brings to mind a story that Kathleen's longtime friend and coworker, Beverly Garland, related to me not too long ago about this very talented lady.

As you are probably already aware, there is a theatrical adaptation of the popular motion picture, *THE FULL MONTY*, which held its first trial performances recently in California. Well, according to Beverly, when the producers were casting for the part of the piano player, several actresses read for it. One in particular, admitted to the casting director that she was unsuitable for the role. However, she readily offered up Ms. Freeman as a possible contact. She was answered with stony silence by the entire production team. "Ms. Who?" they all replied. "Kathleen Freeman," she replied. Still no hint of recognition from the team.

Well, to make a long story short, after a long list of other actresses tried out but were judged unsuitable, the producers finally located Ms. Freeman's agent and she tested for the part. Naturally, she was perfect, and was immediately offered the role. Beverly attended the opening night performance at a theater in Long Beach, California, and when Ms. Freeman appeared on stage she was greeted with thunderous applause and a standing ovation from the entire audience—while the producers and director looked on in stunned disbelief. Even though they offered her the part, they still didn't know her! Well, apparently, there are still enough of us (at least in front of the stage) who know who Kathleen Freeman is and are well aware of her long, varied, and very successful career!

As a very happy postscript, Ms. Freeman will be reprising her role in the upcoming Broadway production of *THE FULL MONTY*. I, for one, look forward to seeing her on stage and will, naturally, be wildly applauding her entrance!

Deborah Del Vecchio
Westwood, NJ

Kathleen Freeman and a stageful of naked men, is that the picture? Who needs CATS?

"The magazine that keeps on giving!" *Scarlet Street* #39 was another superlative effort, which I'm looking through for the third time. The John Agar, Gene Evans, and Curt Siodmak interviews were terrific, and Kevin G. Shinnick, Terry Pace, and John Brunas I hope will do more. Given how two of the subjects have since died, these interviews can't happen soon enough.

Last but not least, Ken Hanke's *WOLF MAN* article was simultaneously erudite

and entertaining, which is often a very elusive mix.

Barry Rivadue
Wantagh, NY

Scarlet Street really had Terry Pace chained to the keyboard for Issue #39, but the sheer mass of articles and interviews with his byline contributed to one of your best issues ever—and that's saying a lot, since there isn't a clunker in the bunch! It was obvious that Mr. Pace has a deep affection for the late Gene Evans. It showed in every word, making this the finest piece I've ever read about him. I'll never be able to look at the "title character" in *DONOVAN'S BRAIN* in quite the same way again!

Speaking of which, Brooke Perry's story about Curt Siodmak's famous book and its three film versions was a treat! I personally prefer the film with Lew Ayres to the Erich von Stroheim from the forties, but Mr. Perry made a good case for his choice.

The Curt Siodmak interview was tragically timely, wasn't it? If the second half is as good as the first, *Scarlet Street* will give fans the definite interview on a genre great—and Forrest J Ackerman's memories of Mr. Siodmak were the perfect companion piece.

Lastly, Richard Valley topped his previous pieces about *WEREWOLF OF LONDON*'s Hugh Renwick and *THE GREAT MUMMY MYSTERY* with his "biography" of

WANTED! MORE READERS LIKE...



Kathleen Freeman



Ygor. What makes these comedy pieces work is Mr. Valley points things out that have always been right there in the films and nobody's ever noticed! Some of them are just for fun, but a lot of them actually make sense! So Peter von Frankenstein murdered Benson, did he? Of course!

Sarah Flatt
San Diego, CA

San Diego, I love you! Listen, that von Frankenstein kid always did have shifty eyes, didn't he? And Little Cloestine, she wasn't fooling anyone . . .

I just finished reading Richard Valley's article, *YGOR: HORROR'S COCKEYED OPTIMIST*, in *Scarlet Street* #39 and laughed so hard I almost fell into the sulphur pit! Ygor has always been a favorite of mine (my uncanny resemblance to the old rascal notwithstanding) and I always enjoy reading other people's speculations about him. So, here goes . . .

Mr. Valley's assertion regarding Ygor's innocence of bodysnatching is noble, but to regard him as "guileless?" Please! His insipid refutation ("I stole bodies—err, dey said!") would embarrass a used-car salesman. Though Fritz was the only graverobbing assistant to be seen in the first melodrama, think: Henry Frankenstein was operating under severe time restrictions, what with freshness of materials being crucial to his success. It is, therefore, not farfetched to assume that Henry might have employed more than one assistant to gather as many stiffs as possible at once. (After all, he and Pretorius hired more than one assistant in *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*.)

As to Ygor's having been made the patsy, authoritative sources have intimated that Henry avoided an enforced slight holiday at the Greybar Hotel on, merely, an unspecified technicality. "But," I hear you cry, "it was Henry, really, who was responsible for all those what lie drowned and murdered, and all those rifled graves!" All too true, but a few thousand crowns for the finest legal counsel was chickenfeed to the (now) Baron. So, with Fritz, Karl, Ludwig, Pretorius, most of the viable witnesses, and the Monster (presumably) dead . . . well, let's warm up the gibbet and grab the only remaining schmuck unlucky enough to have grave dirt on his hands! That's right: our hero.

Continued on page 8



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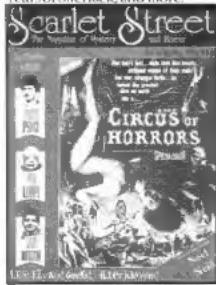
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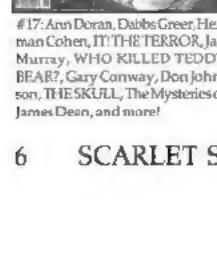
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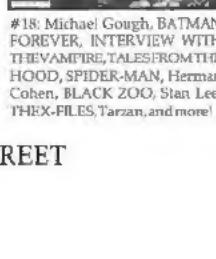
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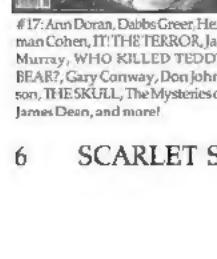
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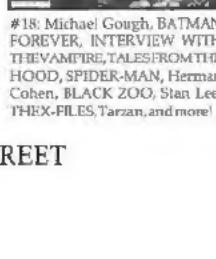
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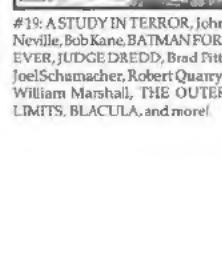
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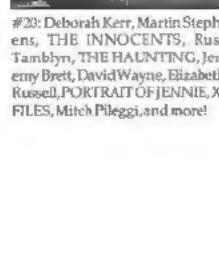
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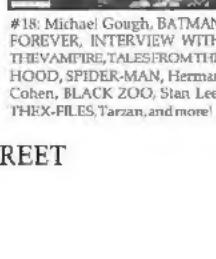
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 4

Now, about that "von" in Wolf von Frankenstein—that's always puzzled me, too. It simply means "from" or "of." By attaching "von" to the surname, was the idea to emphasize or downplay the family connection to those Frankensteins? Who knows? The arguments over the inconsistencies and enigmas in SON OF FRANKENSTEIN are enough to fill a whole issue.

Somebody once suggested that, in THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN, Ygor looks like he's spruced up to go on a job interview. Gone were his farrier's apron, his modified saddlecinch tool belt, and his snaggle teeth. Concurrent with the loss of the above mentioned, Ygor acquired a snappy sport jacket and, apparently, several IQ points. Trying to manipulate Bohmer, Ygor offers the following for consideration: "How would you like to be the leader of your profession in this state . . . head of the medical commission . . . regent of the university?" This from a man who, only one film earlier, shouted to Wolf, "You no touch him again!"

I've never really cared very much for GHOST. Chaney's acting only comes to life after the brain transplant. (If you read MagicImage Filmbooks' GHOST script, you'll see that Chaney had the opportunity to act his young bananas off!) But I dislike the story mainly because (and here's some real fan talk for you) the plot called for the violation of the sanctity of the Monster's brain. (Uh, oh—time to up the meds again!) After all, who was the Monster, anyway, without his Original Wonderfully-Warped Tub-O-Gray-Matter? That old "Was he the Monster or Ygor/Monster?" discussion always bothered me.

Well, I have gone on. And I've been told that I look for logic in the strangest places. But, hey, it keeps me off the

streets—though, fortunately, never off the Scarlet one!

Oh, and by the way, regarding this confounded "hidden agenda" of yours—as soon as I figure out what it is, I'll comment on it. That's a promise!

Michael R. Thomas
Belleville, NJ

Some interesting observations, and perhaps makeup maestro Mike Thomas has some inside info, since there seems to be, shall we say, something of a strong family resemblance to you-know-who.



•

Everyone responsible for Issue #39: Bravo! Bravo! You all did fine work! I've been sick with the flu for the last couple of days, but the "good" part of it was that it let me read the current issue from cover to cover.

I don't want to single everyone out, because that would really take too long, but I have to mention the "big cats": Ye

Reditor and Ken Hanke. First, I found two "glitches" in Richard Valley's Ygor article. Arthur Davis was not a composer for Warner Bros. cartoons. He was an animator, and for a brief period, a director. I think you knew that, so it had to be the Gremlins. Also, the line that Ygor says in THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN is "Better country than this," not "Better country than death!" As the "Ygor" piece is a tongue-in-cheek satire, I will forgive Mr. Valley for stubbornly sticking to his guns regarding Ludwig Frankenstein as the younger sibling. I still contest that he would have had to have gotten married very young, to have a daughter of marrying age, and look so much older than Wolf. Oh, well, never mind!

Ken Hanke did a superb job on the WOLF MAN review. For my money, it's the best of the forties Universals. As for all you other guys, great work! I particularly enjoyed the interviews by Terry Pace, Kevin Shinnick, and John Brunas with Curt Siodmak, John Agar, and Gene Evans! Martin Gram Jr.'s article on the FU MANCHU radio series was a superb bit of research. I'm glad that the question of Harold Huber being cast in this later 1940 series has been put to rest. (It was Ted Osborne, then!) I hope that someone from Radio Spirits or another old-time radio organization can cough up the money to restore those shows. Even an incomplete set of the entire 1940 season is better than what exists now! Anyway, superb job, everybody!

Leonard J. Kohl
Chicago, IL

Actually, those glitches, Len, were just that—the result of either a computer screwup or a Reditor screwup in saving the corrections after they'd been made. As for the Wolf and Ludwig age bugaboo, well, as I've often said, Wolf is the Frankenstein with the baronial

Continued on page 10

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Frankly Scarlet

That great sigh of relief you may have heard coming from the direction of the Scarlet Street offices—that was me after making a preliminary examination of the new ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES DVD. The disc contains the first release on DVD of Granada's classic series starring Jeremy Brett. As members of the Scarlet Street Message Boards know (and if you're not a member, what's keeping you?), I was consulted by MPI Home Video when they decided to put one of the two-hour episodes on disc. They wanted to know which show was best, but I argued that the series deserved to be released in its proper order, from start to finish. The decision was made to do so, and the first four episodes—"A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Dancing Men," "The Naval Treaty," and "The Solitary Cyclist"—were announced. I was asked to choose and name chapters. Watching my 15-year-old videos of these episodes, I was struck by their poor quality, and suggested that the shows desperately needed remastering. Luckily, MPI not only asks for advice—if it's good advice, they take it. They contacted Granada and persuaded them to remaster the programs from the original source material.

Today, I watched the fruits of their labors, and I'm stunned! The shows are beautiful, with sharp images, crisp hues, and, for the most part, vibrant sound. (Alas, Granada hasn't taken very good care of their masters, and there are instances in which the sound is a little "wobbly.") Irene Adler never looked lovelier, the dancing men never so ominous, and the scenes set in 221b Baker Street reveal colors and details I never noticed before. There are some fine bonuses, too, including a photo gallery set to music and a preview for the series.

I fell in love with this series when I first saw it in 1984. It was directly responsible for the creation of Scarlet Street. Previewing this DVD, I know I'm going to fall in love all over again. For fans of Sherlock Holmes, this is cause for celebration. Let there be dancing—from Scarlet to Baker Street!

Readers looking for part two of our interview with the late, great Curt Siodmak will have to wait an issue, I'm afraid. Too much material this issue! And I humbly ask all Scarlet Streeters to patronize our wonderful advertisers, both new and old. Their products are fine stuff, and by giving them the business you'll be keeping us in business . . .

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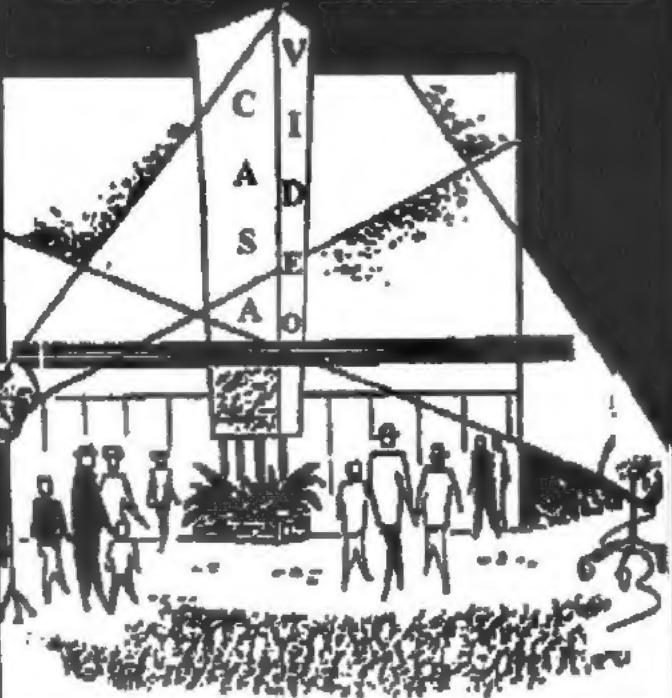
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 8

title, and the title is always bestowed on the firstborn. No matter how old the actors playing the parts may look (and the hyperkinetic Basil Rathbone was, in fact, older than baggy-eyed Sir Cedric Hardwicke by one year), there's no getting around that simple fact. Both actors were mature enough to have a full-grown daughter in 1942 when *THE GHOST OF FRANKENSTEIN* was unleashed on the world, and young enough to have sired a six-year-old son.

Can Scarlet Street really be approaching its 10th anniversary in 2001? Are there any plans to do anything special?

Joe Rogillio
Brooklyn, NY

*You mean besides finally taking a vacation?
Keep watching, Joe! We definitely have some
exciting plans in the works!*

In the same way I was shocked to see the unused take of Madeleine (Kim Novak) turning to look directly at Scotty at the climax of her intro at Ernie's, as seen in the trailer on the DVD of Hitchcock's VERTIGO, I was irritated that something equally entrancing slipped right by the makers of the documentary on the DVD of THE BIRDS.

It's revealed that, due to Hedren's hospitalization after shooting the bedroom attack scene, Rod Taylor was filmed carrying a double down the stairs. The documentary shows the double being placed on the sofa, and then we see Veronica

Cartwright bringing over a hurricane lamp to provide light for Jessica Tandy's medical ministrations. The lamp is placed so that the distorting glass completely obscures the features of the double, yet I heard no particular mention made of that—though we are told that they later shot inserts of Tandy (though, since it's just a hand, my guess is that it was someone else) dabbing at Hedren's face, in medium closeup. But, as I say, no one points out Hitch's clever use of glass (of all things) to hide a face . . .

Bob Gutowski
Jackson Heights, NY

In Lelia Loban and Richard Valley's fascinating article *OUT OF THE BROOM CLOSET* (*Scarlet Street* #37), they bring up an equally fascinating subject—Dennis Bingham's book *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood*, and the screen persona of James Stewart himself. Stewart did have "a softer, more feminine persona than most actors display" and, what's more, he wasn't afraid of it and often showed ample evidence of it.

Alfred Hitchcock handled Stewart's "softness" quite perceptively in two very different films. In *ROPE* (1948), Stewart played a role that had been written, in Patrick Hamilton's original play, as a homosexual. Armed with this foreknowledge, Stewart's character (Rupert Cadell in both versions) deepens considerably today—a gay man has lavished so much time on two prized homosexual students

and, in doing so, has definitely led them astray. In *VERTIGO* (1958), which is essentially a tale of sexual obsession, Hitchcock lavished a great deal of attention on Stewart's performance. In the process, he showed us that Scottie Ferguson's obsession went beyond sex and into the very nature of his well-being. (Scottie simply could not function without Madeleine Elster and, in the end, he probably will kill himself.)

Other directors, such as Anthony Mann and Vincent McEveety, had been aware of the masculine/feminine dualities of Stewart's screen persona and didn't shy away from using them, especially in Western settings. In 1955's *THE FAR COUNTRY*, Stewart is involved with two very different women (Corinne Calvert and Ruth Roman), but his true emotional involvement is with an older, more experienced man (Walter Brennan). This endlessly fascinating aspect of the material adds a great deal of color to an already offbeat and colorful tale. In 1968's *FIRECREEK*, given its relentlessly threatening atmosphere, a "womanly" man (Stewart as a part-time sheriff) is forced into the role of male aggressor and, when it happens, Stewart delivers a memorable wrenching of one man's basic nature. In both films, Stewart is pushed over the edge only when he loses a beloved male companion (*FAR COUNTRY*) or a young male friend (*FIRECREEK*) to the wanton lust of murderers.

Today, because of our new-found perception of James Stewart's film persona.

these films, and many others, are invested with much greater depth and far more importance than could have been perceived or acknowledged in the years of their original release.

Raymond Banacki
Brooklyn, NY



I was impressed with your website.

Well done!

Ron Kritter/ Milwaukee

If there's anyone reading who doesn't know what Ron's talking about, get yourself to www.scarletstreet.com without delay!



Excellent article! I'm referring to THE SHADOW OF FU MANCHU. (SS #39) I was too young to remember those days of the NBC Blue Network broadcasts or THE COLLIER HOUR, but from what is said in this article, those must have been exciting times to hear these realistic stories of the evil Fu Manchu. I had the pleasure of seeing Christopher Lee in the 1965 movie THE FACE OF FU MANCHU. Not only was Christopher Lee great playing Dracula, but he was also great playing Fu Manchu! What is good about radio broadcasts is that everything is left to your imagination. There are no pictures for you to gaze upon, everything must come from your own inventive mind. I have experienced this by renting some of these broadcast tapes at my local library, from Orson Welles' WAR OF THE WORLDS to SHERLOCK HOLMES—and, I believe, one Charlie Chan taping. I was told by my grandfather that he highly enjoyed

the CBS Radio broadcast of FU MANCHU MYSTERIES. Those golden years must have been wonderful. Thank you, Scarlet Street, for bringing this all into focus!

Paul Dale Roberts
Jazma Universe Online!
Elk Grove, CA 95758



Scarlet Street #39 includes the first part of an interview with Curt Siodmak, one of the genre's most important screenwriters. No one will ever say that Mr. Siodmak was an obsequious or insincere man, for he was definitely candid in his remarks about Val Lewton, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney Jr., etc. I disagree with many of his opinions, although I loved his brief jab at Nancy Davis, a bland actress married to a bland actor who became a dreadful president. Siodmak's unbridled frankness reminded me of the Scarlet Street (#26) interview with another candid nonagenarian, actor and author David Manners.

Speaking of authors, Forrest J Ackerman's tribute to Siodmak in CRIMSON CHRONICLES was fine, though in retrospect the final paragraph is poignant indeed. There will be no 100 candle birthday cakes, as Curt Siodmak passed away on September 2, 2000, at the age of 98. Gone but not forgotten....

Timothy M. Walters
Muskegee, OK

We received word of Curt Siodmak's death on the very day Scarlet Street #39 rolled off the press. Sad, because we somehow felt that

the creator of the undying monster, Larry Talbot, would himself live forever.



Scarlet Street continues to be the finest genre magazine in stores, with a fantastic blend of interviews and articles. (I loved the piece on Gene Evans by Terry Pace!) No other mag excels in both departments the way you guys do! You also do it with an admirable sense of humor which is never so smart-ass to insult your readers or the movies and people you write about (unless it's some dumb clown complaining about your "agenda," in which case they deserve what they get). I guess the best way to put it is you're breezy without being trivial, even when you're writing about what most of the world considers trivial things. Long may Scarlet Street live and prosper!

Joe Hamer
Madison, WI

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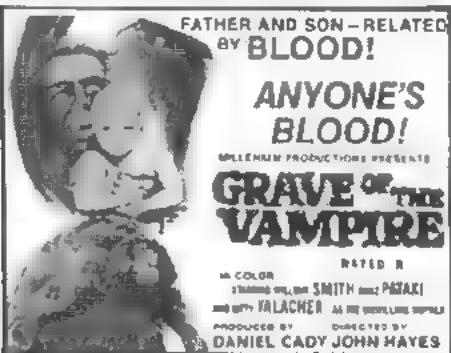
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GRAVE OF THE VAMPIRE (1972) William Smith, Michael Pataki, Kitty Valachich, Lyn Peters. If PRC had been around in 1938 they would have made this film. A bloodthirsty vampire rapes a young woman in an open grave after murdering her fiancé on top of a headstone and drinking his blood. She later finds she's pregnant. When the baby is born, she finds he can't survive without blood so she regularly fills the baby bottle with real blood to keep the little tyke alive. When he grows up, he sets out to hunt down his vampire-Dad and put him in his grave—permanently! He finds Dad (who is a centuries-old bloodsucker) teaching a college class on ancient legends and folklore. He smirks and all hell breaks loose! There are a number of borderline tasteless scenes that will make you start to cringe, yet the film never really crosses the line. It keeps you captivated, from start to finish, between the revolting and the ludicrous. *Grave of the Vampire* is a schlocky cheesy low budget delight and we highly recommend it! Rated R. Color 35mm. H200



THE DANCE OF DEATH (1960) Felix Martin, Françoise Brion, Michèle Mercier. This overlooked gem is a combo horror film and crime film, filled with atmospheric scenes in and around an eerie country mansion and a spooky overgrown cemetery. Unknown killers threaten a playboy millionaire with death. A posh detective comes to the lonely country estate to protect him. Within the mansion's walls are many suspicious characters, including three vampire bombshells (one resembles Barbara Steele), along with two odd servants, one tall dark and ghoulish, the other a small Peter Lorre-type. Terrible things soon happen. The sinister shadow of an unknown killer is seen prowling the grounds in the black of the night. A guard dog is found dead—poisoned. The chauffeur is found his head jammed into the blades of a car's cooling fan—the motor still running! Things finally end up in a local graveyard where our hero is sealed up in a tomb! A neat, twist ending finishes off this fine obscure Euro-thriller. Fairly similar to a '60s Edgar Wallace chiller. Recommended. 16mm H277

SO DARLING, SO DEADLY (1967) Tony Kendall, Brad Harris, Barbara Foy. Another Great Kendall-Harris team-up—the best we've seen to date. This time the boys are a couple of slick investigators hired to come to the Philippines and protect a noted scientist who has developed a fantastic laser power beam that can annihilate targets from 300 miles away. The villains are the mysterious "Golden Dragon" and his Fu Manchu-like assistant who along with a bevy of machine gun and whip-wielding baddies are trying to steal the power beam for their own evil purposes. There's a cool ancient torture chamber—run by the Golden Dragon's wayward beauties—that Tony and Brad end up trapped in. Lots of great action scenes and an occasional touch of gavuine humor. The film also has a sinister oriental flavor that's adds to the atmosphere. A great '60s spy/ci movie. Highly recommended. Beautiful color 16mm SP44



ATLAS (1950) Michael Forest, Frank Wolff, Barbara Morris. At last a beautiful quality copy of this great sword and sandal thriller! Our video master is now from a stunning 35mm color print. Wheee! It's a beauty! Roger Corman actually took his Filmgroup unit to Greece to film this ancient epic and the results were quite pleasing. Wolff is excellent as the evil Prometheus who convinces the mighty Atlas to represent him in battle but eventually finds himself at odds with the sadistic ruler. American made—no dubbing. It's nice to see their lips matching the dialogue for a change. Forest, of course, is well known for his role as "Apollo" in an old episode of the original Star Trek series. Recommended. Color From 35mm SP49

PANIC (1963) Janine Gray, Dyson Lovell, Glyn Houston, Duncan Lamont. What a cool movie. A young lady works for a London jewelry exchange. Unknown to her is a plan by her shiftless boyfriend and his beatnik pals to pull off an elaborate jewel heist. When the robbery occurs, the elderly owner of the exchange is shot dead, the girl knocked over the head. When she comes to, she finds herself about the city in a state of amnesia-driven fury. The scenes of her roaming the streets are small pieces of brilliant filmmaking as she runs into numerous "street people" and other sordid folks. The use of light, shadow and close-ups is superb. After a few close calls with shady characters, she meets a down-and-out boxer who vows to help her regain her memory and solve the crime (for which she is now blamed). One problem—her boyfriend is out to silence her forever. One of director John Gilling's most unsung finds. A minor gem that's worth seeing. Fleetingрудly in one scene. Highly recommended. \$12.98 plus \$2.05 for packaging, handling & postage. 16mm. M319

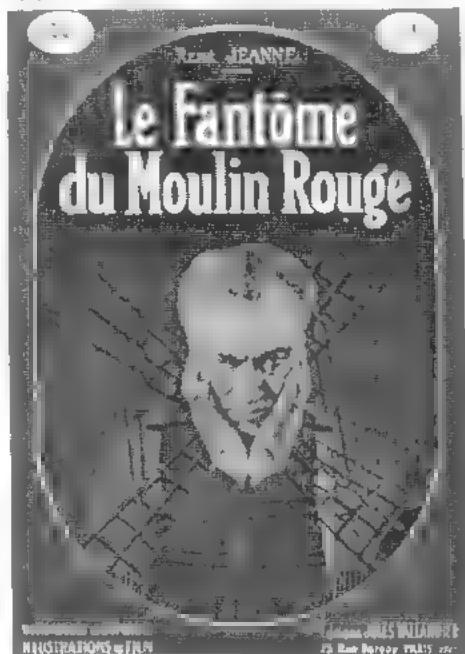
SECRETS OF CHINATOWN (1936) Nick Stewart, Lucille Browne, Ray Lawrence. First time on video! This is the wackiest Chinatown thriller in the Sinister Cinema Library. A Chinese madman "the Black Rose" sends police into a tizzy with murders and drug trafficking. A private eye, called in to help, discovers a fantastic cult in which a beautiful white woman (totally mesmerized) is used as a high priestess for a mystic Chinese ritual in which she materializes from a stone idol! No "explanation" is given for the fantastic incident, so the viewer can only surmise that it is supernatural in nature. The police eventually trace the cult to a mountain hideout. *Secrets of Chinatown* is filled with lurking Chinaman secret panels, dagger throwings, bizarre sets etc. What is the secret of the strange Chinese coins that bring death to everyone who possesses them? Not a great movie—the script is certainly lacking and has continuity problems—but still most interesting even fascinating at times. REALLY low budget. An absolute must for all *Forgotten Horrors* collectors. \$12.95 plus \$2.05 for packaging, handling, and postage. From 16mm. F685



SPECIAL AGENT K-7 (1937) Walter McGrail, Irving Pichel, George Smith, Donald Reed, Duncan Renaldo, Willy Castello, Joy Hodges. Occasionally we turn up some really well-made poverty row thrillers. Here's another one. *Special Agent K-7* is great fun. With McGrail as the suave baddie character who finds himself knee-deep in a murder mystery at a swanky nightclub run by mobster Castello. Pichel is excellent as the smooth-talking lawyer with gangland ties. Renaldo and Reed are prime suspects while Smith is the fast-talking reporter who's on the scene at the time of the murder. Lots of guys in cool suits, good-looking dames, booze, gambling, and gangland patter. There's even a nifty musical number by Hodges. A poverty row must \$12.95 plus \$2.05 for packaging, handling & postage. 16mm. M304

THAT NAUGHTY GIRL (1956) Bridget Bardot, Françoise Fabian, Michèle Auer. Pleasant JD sex comedy with BB as the sexy young daughter of a nightclub owner. After the nightclub is raided by the police, Dad has one of his handsome nightclub entertainers whisk BB out of boarding school and away to Paris so that she won't find out about the police raid. It seems dear old Dad has told BB for years that he's a ship builder! She soon finds herself involved with con artists and eventually the secret service. BB's sitcom looked better. Good fun. Upgraded from a nice Color 16mm print. JS41

PHANTOM OF THE MOULIN ROUGE (1925) Albert Prejean, Sandra Milo, Georges Vautier. An interesting weird fantasy from that master French director René Clair. Julien, a dapper aristocrat, is thrown into despair when his fiancée breaks off with him. She's being forced to wed a shady publisher who is blackmailing her father. Mired in depression, Julien goes to the fabulous nightclub "Moulin Rouge" where he meets the strange Dr. Renault, who takes him to his manor and conducts a weird experiment in which Julien's spirit is freed from his body. Joyful in his release from reality, Julien refuses to re-enter his body. He soars through Paris, causing ghostly mischief everywhere. However when Renault is found with a "lifeless" body, he is arrested for murder. An autopsy is scheduled! Can Julien free his lover from blackmail and return to his body in time? We highly recommend this silent rarity. Music score. 16mm. SP74



ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC BURGESS WALLACE

BRUCE LEE'S DEADLY KUNG FU (1976) Bruce Lee, Wang Chia Ta, Chang Kuan. Bruce and his pals are on the jam from renegade Kung Fu students in San Francisco's Chinatown. It all starts when Bruce beats the crap out of a couple of them after they hassle him over a plate of sweet and sour chicken. However, he seems to have no problem beating up five or six of them at a time whenever he gets cornered. This film has many great fight scenes but at the same time it's so bad it's totally hilarious. Shot on location in San Francisco. The leader of the school looks like an oriental version of Mickey Dolenz. TONS of KF action. Color 16mm. KF11

CASE OF THE MISSING HEIRESS (1945) Valentine Dyall, Julia Lang, Philip Leaver, Hugh Griffith, Peter Drury. A great little mystery that's almost a horror film. A young heiress who stands to inherit millions when married, suddenly vanishes! The inquisitive secretary of a farmed investigator comes to the dark foreboding mansion of the missing heiress's wheelchair-bound uncle to learn the strange secret behind the disappearance. Aided by an eccentric butler she finds the blackened ashes of a human being next to an incinerator in the dark basement of the mansion. There is a thunderclap, suddenly the butler drops to the ground—murdered! Who is the killer? The secretary calls in her boss to solve the case. This forgotten British odd dark house chiller is very spooky, lots of fun, and has all kinds of neat plot devices: hypnotism, missing wills, impersonations, etc. Lots of dark and creepy scenes. Whoever wrote the screenplay must have been a big fan of *Universal's Night Monster*. Definitely recommended. \$12.95 plus \$2.05 for packaging, handling & postage. 16mm. M307

PIGS (1972) Marc Lawrence, Katherine Ross, Jess Vint, Paul Hickey. What a weird movie. This crazy dame flees from the booby hatch. She meets up with a demented old pig farmer. Together they enter into a Sweeney Todd-type situation wherein they commit a series of grisly murders after which they take their victims' bodies and use them as pig slop! Later, of course, the pigs are sold for human consumption. Man-eat rice anybody? Ugh! This is a movie you won't forget soon—unbelievable. Rated R. Color 16mm. H282



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THE RISK (1959) Peter Cushing, Tony Britton, Thorley Walters, Donald Pleasence, Ian Bannen. Cushing heads a research lab that has created a super virus that cures bubonic plague. The government sees it as a horrible germ-warfare weapon and forbids them to publish their work. Will they publish anyway or give it to another government? This great thriller keeps you guessing to the end. From 16mm. \$224

DESTINATION SPACE (1959) Harry Townes, John Agar, Cicely Kellaway, Ed Platt. First time on video! Just when you thought you'd seen all the '50s sci-fi ever made, this forgotten b/w gem shows up. Destination Space is a terrific, steady produced space opera with Agar and Townes in charge of a giant space station. During an attempted rocket launch, a meteor smashes into the station, crippling it. Later it's discovered that an overload within the rocket will cause a nuclear explosion—within minutes! HIGHLY recommended. 16mm. \$225

SO DARLING SO DEADLY (1967) Tony Kendall, Brad Harris, Barbara Frey. A great Kendall-Harris team-up—the best we offer. The boys are a couple of slick investigators hired to stop the mysterious "Golden Dragon" from getting possession of a laser death ray! Plenty of great action scenes. Highly recommended. Color 16mm. \$245

ON THE COMET (1968) Emil Horvath, Magda Vesarykova, Frantisek Filipovsky. The fourth of Karel Zeman's Verna films is an unforgettable voyage into fantastical visual wizardry. Adapted from Verna's *Hector Servadac*, it recounts how a massive chunk of the Earth becomes a comet, soaring through space with all of the area's populace still on it. It ultimately drifts into a collision course with Earth. This charming sci-fi fantasy is a visual delight! Color 16mm. \$226

VOYAGE INTO SPACE (1970) Mitsundbu Kaneko, Akiro Ito, Shozaburo Date. One of the most hilarious, campy sci-fi movies you'll ever see. Giant super hero Johnny Soko is pitted against the evil monster Dracoton. He and his flying robot try to stop this terrifying monster from destroying Tokyo. Call your friends and grab a couple of six-packs—it's party time. Color from 16mm. \$227

The CREMATORS

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FIRE-PEOPLE
TO INCINERATE

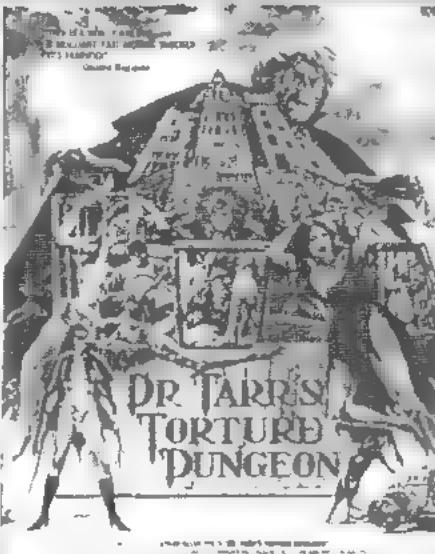
Screenplay by Alexander Demyanenko. Directed by Alexander Demyanenko. Produced and distributed by Kino International. Special Edition. An American Production

THE CREMATORS* (1972) Marvin Howard, Maria Di Aragon, Eric Alper. A scientist doing research near a remote part of the Great Lakes region discovers a series of bizarre droplets that seem to have a life of their own and are in some way connected to a gigantic energy monster that lurks in the waters below. Soon bodies are found that have been incinerated into heat piles of ashes. Color 16mm. \$228

WAR OF THE ROBOTS (1973 aka REACTOR) Antonio Sabato, James Stuart, Melinda Long. A bunch of robot creatures kidnap an Earth woman. Her astronaut pals hop in their ships and pursue them across space, eventually running into all kinds of alien resistance. This film is filled with more pitched space battles and ray gun fights than you can shake a light saber at. Hokey, but fun. Color. 35mm. \$229

HOORROR

THE DANCE OF DEATH (1960) Felix Martin, Françoise Brion, Michelle Mercier. This scary gem takes place in and about an eerie country mansion and local cemetery. A playboy is threatened with death. He hires a detective to protect him. Terrible things soon happen. The sinister shadow of an unknown killer prowls the grounds in the black of the night. Things eventually end up in a local graveyard where our hero is sealed within a cement tomb! From 16mm. \$227



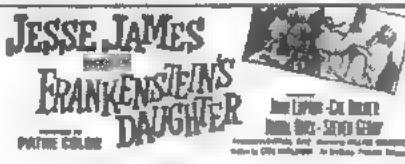
BLOOD OF NOSTRADAMUS (1960) German Robles, Aurora Alvarez, Julio Araman, Domingo Solar. Member Robles is a vampire descended from the prophet, Nostradamus. He and his weird hunchback have marked a police inspector for death. The police go after him with silver bullets, but in the end they stalk him to a fun night on the town. So bad it's a great—don't miss it. 16mm. \$228

JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER* (1968) John Lupton, Narda Onyx, Cai Boider, Nestor Paliva. One of the great bad movies of all time, directed by master Z. filmmaker William Beaudine. Frankenstein's daughter goes wild and starts up Dad's research again. She puts the original monster's brain in the skull of one of Jesse James' pals, even calls him "go". Color 16mm. \$228

CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE (1968) John Agar, Jeff Alexander, Francis York. Another great bad movie from the 1960s. A mad doctor creates big, hulking reptile monsters at his secret lab in the Everglades. Using local natives for his experiments, his creation walks around with poofy fangs and ping-pong ball eyes—really goofy. Yet, Curse of the Swamp Creature has many of the usual horrific-all elements that so many of us baby-boomers love. Color 16mm. \$228

GRAVE OF THE VAMPIRE* (1972) William Smith, Michael Pataki, Kitty Valachar. A vampire rapes a woman in an open grave after murdering her boyfriend atop a headstone. She later finds she's pregnant. After birth, she finds her baby can't survive without blood so she regularly fills the baby's bottle with real blood. When he grows up, he sets out to put his vampire Dad back in his grave—permanently! A shockingly cheesy low-budget delight. Rated R. Color 35mm. \$228

THE LORELEY'S GRASP* (1972) Tony Kendall, Helga Liné. A terrific monster movie! A beautiful woman transforms into a snarling lizard-type monster that rips apart local citizens in-and-around a forest-shrouded girls' school filled with bikini-clad beauties. Kendall is hired to hunt the creature down but is torn between his love for the mysterious Liné, and his growing suspicion of whom she really is. The best Euro-horror film we've seen in a long while. Color 16mm. \$281



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PIGS* (1972) Marc Lawrence, Katherine Ross, Jesse Vint, Paul Hickey. A crazy woman escapes from the booby hatch. She meets up with a demented old pig farmer. Together they commit several grisly murders, after which they take their victims' bodies and use them as pig slop! Later the pigs are sold for human consumption. Men tried nice anybody? A movie you won't forget soon. Color 16mm. \$224

THE WICKER MAN (1973) Christopher Lee, Ingrid Pitt, Edward Woodward. UNCUT at 101 minutes! One of the best horror films ever. A British policeman is lured to a remote offshore island village to investigate the disappearance of a girl. However, what the villagers really have in mind is too horrible for words. NOTE: This is the original Magnum pre-record that's no longer available in stores. It's recorded at SP. Limited quantity, so order soon! Rated R. Color 35mm. \$228

DR. TARR'S TORTURE DUNGEON* (1973) Arthur Hanes, Claudio Brook, Ellen Sherman. This is one surreal movie. A reporter goes to a bizarre insane asylum in the middle of a haunted forest. There's some really really weird stuff going on—a strange story line. Some say this is awful others say it's a classic. You decide. Sounds like it was dubbed in a garbage can. Rated R. Color 35mm. \$224

THE BOOGIE MAN (1980) John Carradine, Suzanne Lowe, Ron James. A girl and her brother guard the secret of a childhood murder. Years later they return to the scene of the crime but discover a supernatural horror from beyond! Recommended. NOTE: This is the original Magnum pre-record (recorded at SP) no longer available in stores. Quantity is limited so order now! Rated R. Color 35mm. \$228

The DEVIL'S DAUGHTER



SWORD & SANDAL

ATLAS* (1960) Michael Forest, Ernani Wolff, Barbara Morris. At last, a beautiful quality copy of this fine sword and sandal thriller! Our master is now from a stunning 35mm Technicolor print. Wolff is great as the evil Praximedes who convinces the mighty Atlas to represent him in battle—but eventually finds himself at odds with the sadistic ruler American made—no dubbing! Recommended. Color 35mm. \$228

APHRODITE, GODDESS OF LOVE (1960) Antonio De Teffe, Isabelle Corte, Irene Tunc. A sword and sandal rarity. The mistress of a powerful Roman official aways him to persecute Christians as an act of revenge against a past lover. Lots of action and intrigue during the time of Nero. Italian with English subtitles. Color 35mm. \$2110

HERCULES AND THE MASKED RIDER (1960) Alan Steele, Ettore Manu. A carefree soldier is banished after making a play for the wrong woman (she was engaged to another guy). He eventually meets up with a band of gypsies and wins their respect when he overcomes their muscle-bound leader. Color from 16mm. \$2111

DAMON AND PYTHIAS (1962) Guy Williams, Don Burnett, Ilaria Occhini. A lovable rogue Damon and his band rob a young Greek philosopher Pythias. Before long, they are both fleeing from the unruly troops of Diomus, a tyrannical Greek ruler. Damon and Pythias soon become fast friends and go through many exciting adventures together. A lively sword and sandal thriller. 16mm. \$2112

TWO GLADIATORS (1964) Richard Harrison, Mora Orfeo, Alfonso Palmera. Upon the death of Marcus Aurelius, a Senator of the Tribune acts out to find the twin brother of the cruel new Roman emperor. The Senator hopes to convince the lost brother to return to Rome and claim his rightful place on the throne of the Empire. Lots of thrusting swords and arena combat. Not bad. Color 16mm. \$2113

VILENT THRILLERS

THE WHISTLE (1921) William S Hart, Frank Brownlee, Myrtle Stedman Bill is a mill worker who urges his boss to make necessary safety changes. His boss ignores him. As luck would have it, Bill's son is killed in a mill accident when he is mangled in an unprotected belt! Later Bill rescues his boss's son from a car that plunges into a river. Vengeful, Bill then kidnaps the child. Music score. 16mm ST47

PHANTOM OF THE MOULIN ROUGE (1924) Albert Prejean, Sandra Milovanov, George Vrulich A Rane-Clair fantasy. A man goes to the lonely estate of the mysterious Dr. Renault, whose strange experiments release the man's spirit from his body. The spirit wreaks paranormal havoc across Paris. However, when Renault is found with a "senseless" body, he is arrested for murder. An autopsy is scheduled. Can the spirit return to its body in time? Music score. 16mm ST48

HOUSE OF USHER/DEVIL'S BALL/TRIP TO THE MOON (1928, 1933, 1902) Three bizarre short subject classics. Merville Webber's Fall of the House of Usher is a tale of creeping madness accented with weird visual images. At the Devil's Ball (technically not a silent film) is without a doubt, one of the most fantastic pieces of stop-motion animation you will ever see. Mates' A Trip to the Moon is another visual delight and a must for all early sci-fi collectors. All in all, this is a must have tape. Music scores on all. From 16mm ST49

THE DRAKE CASE (1929, Universal) Gladys Brockwell, Forrest Stanley, Robert Frazer, James Crane A divorced woman whose ex-hubby is supposedly dead discovers that not only is he alive but that he's remanded! However, when the new wife ends up murdered, the ex-wife has the blame pointed at her. Music score. 16mm ST50



FORGOTTEN HORRORS

NOTE: All Forgotten Horror titles are just \$12.95 (unless otherwise noted), plus \$2.05 per title for packaging, handling, and postage

JAWS OF JUSTICE (1933) Richard Tamm (Jack Perrin), Robert Walker, Ruth Sullivan, Lila McKee An old timer is murdered after discovering a lost gold mine. His body thrown to the bottom of a ravine. A Moundie, aided by the old timer's daughter and a strange mule boy, tries to track down the killer and find the location of the secret mine. The villain dies in a really cool way! The first Kazan film. 16mm FH43

A WOMAN CONDEMNED (1934) Richard Herringway, Lola Lane, Claudia Dell, Jason Robards, Mischa Auer A learned singer disappears from sight, then ends up murdered—shot! A mysterious blonde is blamed for the slaying, but an acerbic reporter sets out to prove her innocence. The trail leads to a creepy sanatorium run by a weird scientist who has strange ideas about "brain surgery." 16mm FH44

SECRETS OF CHINATOWN (1935) Nick Stuart, Lucy Browne, Ray Lawrence An Oriental mercer baffles police with murders and drug trafficking. A detective, called in to help, discovers a mystic cult and witnesses a white woman materializing from a stone idol. Secrets of Chinatown is filled with lurking Chinamen, secret parades, bandits, etc. etc. Cheap, but a Forgotten Horror must. From 16mm FH45

THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER* (1939) Nina McKinney, Ida James, Jack Carter, Hamtree Harrington. Two sisters— one good, one evil (she pretends witchcraft) clash over the rights to an aging Jamaican estate. The good sister is soon drugged and subjected to a blood dance ritual. The bad sister recites the death incantation over her! Will the good sister survive? This all-black thriller is included in the upcoming edition of *Forgotten Horrors* (1937-1943). Remastered from 16mm FH46

MARTIAL ARTS

TIGER FORCE (1975) Chen Keng, Lousi Key, Cheng Lai Lots of hard-hitting martial arts action in this Japanese action thriller. A tough undercover agent—also an expert in martial arts—is called in to solve a kidnapping and bust up an illegal drug ring. Color. 16mm KF10

BRUCE LEE'S DEADLY KUNG FU (1976) Bruce L. Wong, Chi Ta, Chang Kwei Bruce and his pal are on the lam from renegade Kung Fu students in San Francisco's Chinatown. However, he seems to have no problem beating up five or six of them at a time whenever he gets cornered. TDNS of KF action. Color. 16mm KF11

FISTS LIKE LEE (1976 aka THE CHINESE MACK) Lao Chen Ling, Kao Xing. There are the usual zillion fight scenes in this obscure Kung Fu thriller. However, the story line has the novel twist of having the hero slowly changing into a bad guy. The final clash between two brothers (who don't know that they are brothers) is quite memorable. Raed R for nudity and violence. Color scope. From 35mm KF12

HARD AS A DRAGON (1978) Raymond Lui, Sau Chi Ying A nomadic martial arts expert makes enemies with a gang of thugs when he defends a helpless man the gang is after. After several action-packed run-ins, the gang gets him framed for murder! The climactic fight has to be one of the best in Kung Fu film history, riveting even some of Bruce Lee's famous fights. Color scope. From 35mm KF13



ACT-UP ADVENTURE

ONE WAY TICKET TO HELL (1956) Barbara Marks, Robert Sherry, Joe Popovich A wayward babe finds herself hooked up with a drug-using motorcycle gang. She ends up sailing dope for "Mr. Big." When the cops close in, she heads for Mexico but is overtaken by the horror of withdrawal symptoms. Cheap, but engrossing. 16mm JS45

THAT NAUGHTY GIRL* (1956) Bridget Bardot, Mischa Auer, Françoise Fabian Fun JD sex comedy with BB as a sexy daughter of a night club owner. BB is shipped off to boarding school when Dad's club is raided. She later finds herself involved with counterfeitors and the secret service. Upgraded from a nice color 16mm print. JS46

THE CHEATERS (1963) Pascale Petit, André Parize, Laurent Terzieff, Danièle Cormier, Jacques Charron This is a very rare BB film, not commonly available anywhere. It's teenagers on the loose again with a college student becoming involved with a bunch of fast-living delinquents. A must for all JD collectors. From 8mm JS48

A SWINGIN' SUMMER* (1966) James Stacy, William Wellman Jr., Quinn O'Hara A group of ambitious teens take over a resort and try to turn it into a "hot spot." They have a bunch of well-known rock and roll acts, including a pre-fame Gary Lewis and the Playboys. Typical fun mid-60s Juvenile schlock. Technicolor 35mm JS49

ACT-UP ADVENTURE

NOTE: All Action-Adventure titles are just \$12.95 (unless otherwise noted), plus \$2.05 per title for packaging, handling, and postage

NOW OR NEVER* (1935) Dick Talmadge, Janet Chandler, Roger Walker, Ed Davis A group of gangsters are after some valuable jewels. Dick tries to help the owner (he look-alike also played by Dick) help the thieves. The plan backfires though, and the crooks end up with the jewels. Before he knows it, Dick's arrested for murdering his double! Who's the real killer? From 16mm AA23

MEN OF ACTION (1936 aka BORN TO FIGHT) Francis X. Bushman, Roy Mason, Barbara Worth, Edwin Maxwell. A lively Detroi action picture with Freddie as the orphan son of a dam worker killed by a sabotage explosion at a dam project. Plenty of action as Freddie helps the dam builders bring the saboteurs to justice. From 16mm AA24

TWO MINUTES TO PLAY* (1936 Victory) Herman Brix, Eddie Nugent, Jeanne Moreau, Betty Compton, Duncan Renaldo, Grady Sutton, Herman and Eddie both college football studs vie for Betty's affections in this frothy sports action picture from Sam Katzman's Victory Pictures. The big game finale is great fun. From 16mm AA25

NIGHT RIDER (1937) Julian Vandy, Jimmy Hanley, Wally Patch, John Ponsford Two truck drivers are fired because of the spoiled brat daughter of the company owner. They start up their own truck line but are put to the test when they face sabotage from unscrupulous competitors while trying to help save trapped miners in a life-and-death race against time. This is really a pretty good movie. 35mm AA26

THE SHOOT (1964) Jim Barker, Ralf Walker, Mano Verano, Rick Bakshi, Directed by Robert Siodmak A notorious bandit kidnaps Lex's friend. Later the same villain burns down a farmhouse and carries away the farmer's daughter Lex and his partner put their lives in danger as they join in the pursuit. Very exciting! Color 16mm AA27



ESPIONAGE INTRIGUE

DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT (1954) Paul Carpenter, Martha Hunt, Henry Oscar Honor Blackman An interesting British intrigue thriller about a gang of smugglers in Paris. An American diplomat's car is used for their Jews smuggling scheme! From 16mm SP43

THE BLACK CHAPEL (1962) Dawn Adams, Peter Van Eyck, Gino Sani, Tassie, true WW2 intrigue thriller about journalist Van Eyck who is given anti-Hitler documents by mysterious German officers. His liaison is an agent in Rome. However, he soon discovers the agent has been murdered! Good cast. Recommended. 16mm BP44

PASSWORD: KILL AGENT GORDON (1965) Roger Browne, Helga Line, Frank Reesel, Michael Rivers. An arms smuggling ring plans a huge shipment of arms to the Viet Cong. A tough CIA agent is called in to quash the deal. His adventures take him across two continents. Lots of action in this OK spy thriller. Color 16mm SP45

SO DARLING, SO DEADLY (1967) Tony Kendall, Brad Harris, Barbara Foy Another Great Kendall-Harris team-up. This time the boys are a couple of slick investigators hired to stop the mysterious 'Golden Dragon' from getting possession of a laser death ray! Plenty of great action scenes. Highly recommended. Color. 16mm SP46

OBSS 117. DOUBLE AGENT (1969) John Gavin, Curt Jurgens, Margaret Lee Gavin plays a slick secret agent who has his face surgically altered to resemble a notorious killer. He is arrested by the police but soon after a secret crime organization (headed by Jurgens) breaks him out and hires him to perform a key assassination. A very good, action-packed spy thriller. Color from 16mm SP47

MYSTERY-SUSPENSE-FILM NOIR

NOTE: All Mystery-Suspense titles are just \$12.95 (unless otherwise noted), plus \$2.05 per title for packaging, handling, and postage

THE LAST MILE* (1932) Preston Foster, Howard Phillips, George E. Stone, Noel Madison, Paul Fix A terrific cast makes this B crime epic a real winner. A man is falsely convicted of murdering his business partner during a gas station holdup and sentenced to die. Right before his execution a death row killer takes over the cellblock, causing a tense standoff with armed guards. Recommended. From 16mm M301

POSTAL INSPECTOR* (1939) Gale Luiga, Ricardo Cortez, Patricia Ellis Upgrade! Our new video master is from a 35mm nitrate print and looks far better than our old master. There are a few spicier spots, but overall this is a huge improvement. Bela is a gangster who puts a \$3,000,000 heist! Cortez is the G-man who tracks him down. The climax features a boat chase through a flooded city. 35mm M302

WIVES UNDER SUSPICION (1937 Universal) Warren William, William Lundigan, Gale Patrick, Ralph Morgan, Constance Moore A sick little Universal crime film. William is the hard-nosed DA who will stop at nothing to get a conviction on accused murderer Morgan. Then he finds himself tempted to commit the same crime. 16mm M303



SPECIAL AGENT K-7 (1937) Walter McGrail, Irving Pichel, Queenie Smith, Donald Reed. A fine poverty row thriller. Agent K-7 finds himself knee-deep in a murder mystery at a posh night club run by a mobster. Pichel is great as the smooth-talking unscrupulous gangland type. Who done it? Lots of guys in cool suits, gorgeous dames, and gangland patter. There's even a nifty musical number. 16mm M304

FEMALE FUGITIVE (1938) Evelyn Venable, Craig Reynolds, Reed Hadley, John Kelly A woman is shocked when she discovers her husband is the head of a truck-hijacking ring. When he forces her to drive their getaway car, she finds herself wanted by the police too. An OK Monogram crime thriller with a pretty good cast. 16mm M305

EYES IN THE NIGHT* (1942) Edward Arnold, Dennis Reed, Ann Harding, Stanley Ridges, Marion Moreland, Reginald Denny, Allen Jenkins. A first rate MGM whodunit with a top cast. Arnold plays a blind, yet crafty detective who is brought in to solve a horrible murder with the help of his extraordinary seeing-eye dog. He finds himself between two feuding families, but eventually the trail leads to a ring of spies! Director Fred Zimmerman's first feature and it's a good one. Interesting to see Reed as a vicious spoilt brat. A must, of course for all Marion Moreland completists. Recommended. 16mm M306

A MAN ABOUT THE HOUSE (1947) Kieron Moore, Margaret Johnson, Dulcie Gray. Intriguing thriller about two English spymen who inherit a villa in Italy. Before you know it, their handyman/butler is plotting their murders. Upgraded from a nice 16mm print. M307

CASE OF THE MISSING HEIRESS (1948) Valentine Dyall, Julie Lang, Philip Leaver, Hugh Griffith, Peter Drury. Almost a horror film. An heiress suddenly vanishes. A detective comes to the fathom mansion of the missing heiress's wheelchair-bound uncle to discover the secret behind the disappearance. This dark house chiller is very spooky, with lots of dim, creepy scenes. Recommended. 16mm M307

THE LIE (1964) Lee Bowman, Ramsey Ames, Eva Probst, Harold Monash. A guy goes out drinking with his buddies. When he wakes up the next morning, he finds a man dead on his apartment floor—shot to death. He goes on trial for murder, but his pals get on the stand and lie about his whereabouts the night of the murder. Why? What is the truth behind their sinister conspiracy? A nifty mystery. 16mm M308

CONFESS DR. CORDA (1961) Hardy Kruger, Elizabeth Mueller. A promising young doctor plans a rendezvous with a beautiful girl at a park bench near a remote wooded area. When she arrives, he finds her battered body lying next to a stream—murdered! He then finds himself to be the prime suspect. Who's the real killer? Not bad. 16mm M309

PANIC (1963) Janine Gray, Dylan Lovell, Glyn Houston. A cool movie. A London jewelry exchange is robbed. The exchange owner is shot and his secretary knocked out. When she comes to, she finds herself with a dead boss and no memory. She wanders about the city in a state of amnesia—driven fear while the thieves plan to bump her off. The use of light and shadow is superb. Recommended. 16mm M310

THE RIP-OFF (1977) Lee Van Cleef, Karen Black, Robert Alda, Edward Albert, Lionel Stander. This obscure Van Cleef crime thriller is about a colorful gang of hoodlums looking for fast, easy bucks. Things get heavy when they try to pull off a \$6,000,000 heist! Color. 16mm M311

the NEWS



HOUND

Dodge the doggerel and hop into The Hound's den for some choice chatter about fearsome future features in all manner of media . . .

Theatrical Thrills

Computer geeks take note: old-fashioned stop-motion animation is alive and well—although somewhat twisted. Proof positive is *MONKEYBONE* from Henry Selick (the director of *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS*), which is headed for theaters in November. The 20th Century Fox comedy/fantasy stars Brendan Fraser as a comic-strip artist who falls into a coma (quite a comedy, eh?) and enters an elaborately created cartoon environment combining live-action and stop-motion. Giving Fraser grief is his own simian cartoon character, *Monkeybone* (voiced by Paul Rubens), as well as a variety of bizarre characters portrayed by Chris Kattan (*SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*), Rose McGowan (*SCREAM 3*), Dave Foley (*KIDS IN THE HALL*), Megan Mullally (*WILL AND GRACE*), and Whoopi Goldberg.

Also premiering in November: *CHARLIE'S ANGELS* (Columbia), starring Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz, and Lucy Liu, with appearances by Tim Curry and Crispin Glover . . . *RED PLANET* (Warner Bros.), an interplanetary drama featuring Val Kilmer, Carrie-Anne Moss and Terence Stamp . . . Arnold Schwarzenegger's sci-fi actioner *THE 6TH DAY* (Columbia), costarring Tony Goldwyn and Robert Duvall . . . Disney's live-action sequel *102 DALMATIANS*, again starring Glenn Close as Cruella De Vil . . . the suspense thriller *UNBREAKABLE* (Touchstone) from *SIXTH SENSE* writer/director M. Night Shyamalan . . . and the (green) rubber-faced Jim Carrey in the title role of director Ron Howard's *HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS* (Universal), with Seussian narration provided by Anthony Hopkins, substituting for the absolutely unsupstitutable Boris Karloff.

Due in theaters in December: *WES CRAVEN PRESENTS DRACULA 2000* (Dimension), starring British actor Gerard Butler (*TALE OF THE MUMMY*) as the Count and Christopher Plummer as his perennial nemesis Van Helsing . . . *SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE* (Lion's Gate) starring John Malkovich as F.W. Murnau and Willem Dafoe as his Nosferatu . . . Sam Raimi's E.S.P. thriller *THE GIFT* (Paramount), featuring Cate Blanchett, Keanu Reeves, Katie Holmes, and Hilary Swank . . . and Kubrick's 2001 *A SPACE ODYSSEY*, which will receive a limited theatrical rerelease on the eve of its title year.

Future Features

Former *X-FILES* and *MILLENNIUM* producers Jim Wong and Glen Morgan, creators of last year's teen sci-fi flick *FINAL DESTINATION*, are taking over a long-aborning feature project called *AFTER THE VISITATION*. Based on the 1977 Russian novel *Roadside Picnic* by the brothers Strugatsky, the plot involves the infiltration of a secret United Nations compound where, unbeknownst to the world at large, first alien contact occurred decades ago. Vacanting ETs, using Earth as a pit stop, carelessly left behind some "trash," which becomes the Holy Grail to clued-in scavengers of various ilk and motive. (Hmm—great roles for W.C. Fields and Kathleen Howard if they're free!) The story was previously filmed in

monolith's carvings. The deep-sea action/horror film is now shooting in Spain.

Nowadays, Stephen King doesn't even have to bother publishing a book before the movie version is announced. Castle Rock has purchased the film rights to *THE DREAMCATCHER*, King's upcoming novel that won't debut until next summer. The story involves four childhood friends who band together as grownups to defeat an evil enemy by utilizing a supernatural "gift" they received as children.

Deja Views

Joel Silver, high-powered producer of *THE MATRIX* and last year's *HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL* among many others, plans to mount a new version of Michael Crichton's 1973 hit *WESTWORLD*. It's presently unknown whether Crichton, who directed the original for MGM based on his original screenplay, will return as helmer. The mega-selling novelist has had a serviceable career as a filmmaker, with *WESTWORLD*, *COMA* (1978), and *THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY* (1979) being his most noteworthy efforts.

Movie sequels due next year include Ridley Scott's *HANNIBAL* (MGM), starring Anthony Hopkins, Julianne Moore and Gary Oldman; *THE MUMMY RETURNS* (Universal), with returnees Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, and Arnold Vosloo; *BLADE 2* (New Line), starring Wesley Snipes and directed by Guillermo del Toro (*MIMIC*), *JURASSIC PARK 3* (Universal); and *JASON X: FRIDAY THE 13TH PART 10* (New Line).

Updates Aplenty

When Arnold says, "I'll be bokk," he's not kidding. After many rumors and rumblings, *TERMINATOR 3* is headed for the screen, with Schwarzenegger returning as the famed cyborg, and Edward Furlong reprising his role as young John Connor. Scenarist Tedi Sarafian (*TANK GIRL*) is completing the script, and production is slated to start next year for a planned Summer 2002 release. Director James Cameron and actress Linda Hamilton have said they will not be involved, but an interesting rumor has Hamilton's identical twin sister, Leslie Gearren, being considered for the part of Sarah Connor.

Columbia's production of *SPIDER-MAN* starring Tobey Maguire (*THE CIDER HOUSE RULES*) begins shooting in January for a scheduled Summer 2001 appearance. Kate Hudson (*ALMOST FAMOUS*) is in negotiations to play Peter



Louise Allbritton is a vampire in training and Lon Chaney Jr. is the SON OF DRACULA (1943), part of this year's Monsterfest on American Movie Classics.

1979 as *STALKER* by the late Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky, whose *SOLARIS* (due to be remade by producer James Cameron) is a recognized sci-fi classic. Morgan and Wong's Stateside version is scheduled to begin production at Columbia in the Fall of 2001.

Director Stuart Gordon (*RE-ANIMATOR*) returns to the realm of H.P. Lovecraft with *DAGON*. Based on Lovecraft's 1917 short story, the film concerns an island castaway who finds an ancient monolith covered with mysterious inscriptions. (No, it's not Richard Hatch.) He eventually discovers the island's unusual origins and the inhuman source of the

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JOHN: Hey, Roddy, it's John! Tab and I were just up the Amazon hunting for the Creature and it's turned poor Tab into a real basket case! We figure we're going to relax by signing onto the swell new Discussion Boards on the Scarlet Web Site. You can sign on and talk about classic Universal Horrors, Hammer Films, Sherlock Holmes, Charlie Chan, Alfred Hitchcock, Tarzan of the Apes, The Thin Man, Jack the Ripper, and just about anything else that comes to mind! Why, heck, you can even talk about sexual subtexts in old pictures...

TAB: Subtexts? I see what you mean!

Yes, it's...

Scarlet Street

The Website of Mystery and Horror

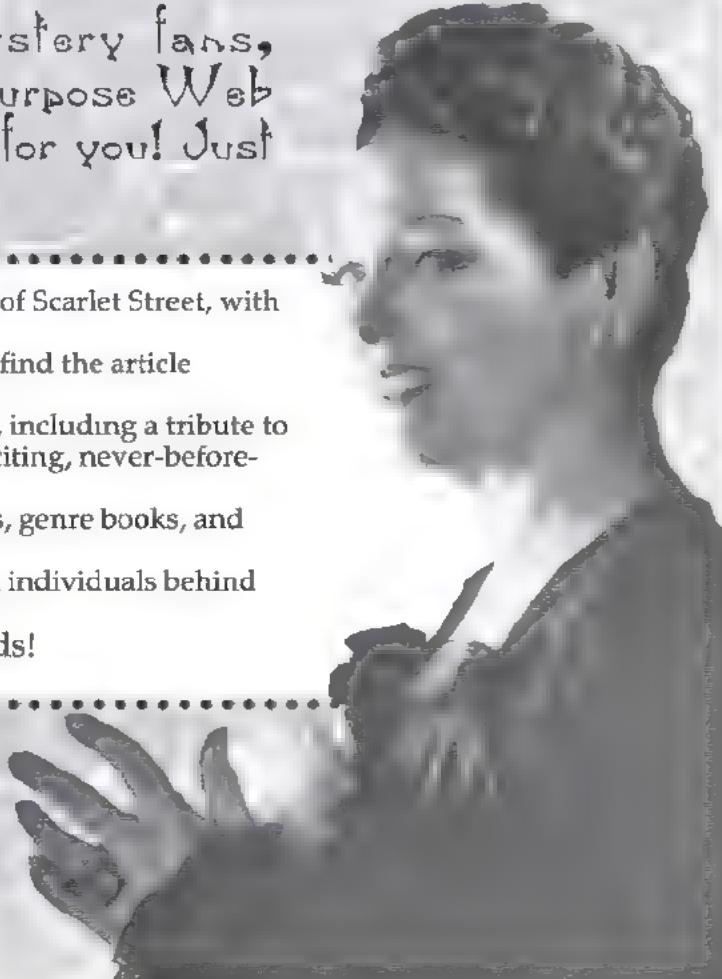
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Poirot Investigates

Campion (1989), Michael Gambon as Maigret (1991), and Patrick Malahide as Inspector Alleyn (1993), among others.

Morse excepted, the stiffest competition for Holmes came in the forms of an elderly English spinster and a pudgy Belgian with an egg-shaped noggin—Agatha Christie's Miss Marple (Joan Hickson) and Hercule Poirot (David Suchet). Dame Joan has since departed us, after filming every one of Christie's full-length Miss Marple mysteries, but recently David Suchet returned to the role of the fussy detective with the little grey cells, to splendid effect.

A&E has embarked on a fresh series of Poirot adventures in association with Carnival Films, the company that produced the original series. The first two full length features—THE MURDER OF ROGER ACKROYD and LORD EDGWARE DIES—have now been released on DVD (\$39.95 for the set), and they're crisp, colorful transfers. In ROGER ACKROYD, we find Poirot in retirement in a country village not unlike Jane Marple's St. Mary Mead, and as with St. Mary Mead, crime is not far away. In LORD EDGWARE, the Belgian is back in London, just in time to investigate the mur-

der of an actress' titled husband. Regulars Hugh Fraser (Captain Hastings), Philip Jackson (Inspector Japp), and Pauline Moran (Miss Lemon) are all on hand for the murderous mayhem.

Meanwhile, Acorn Media has begun releasing episodes of the original series on DVD, beginning with two of the best: THE ABC MURDERS and DEATH IN THE CLOUDS, with more shows promised. THE ABC MURDERS is not only a sharp production, but one of the finest Christie mysteries, with a clever plot that will keep fans guessing till the end. It's also one of the few classic mysteries to concern itself with a serial killer, a situation that puts Poirot at a distinct disadvantage. Before the finish, though, he's proven once again that the solution is as simple as ABC. The Acorn Media releases are priced at \$24.95 each, and the quality is every bit as good as that found on the A&E DVDs.

With Hercule Poirot on DVD, can Miss Marple be far behind? Let's hope not, because these two series are just the thing to watch on a chill night, with a fire burning cozily and a body in the library

—Richard Valley

IT seems like so terribly long ago, but it was only within the past 16 years that British television showered a series of wondrous gifts on devoted fans of classic murder mysteries—several series, in fact. Jeremy Brett led the way as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes (1984), and appearances—some fleeting, some lasting—were made by John Thaw as Inspector Morse (1987), Edward Petherbridge as Lord Peter Wimsey (1987), Peter Davison as Albert

NEWS HOUND

Continued from page 16

Parker's main squeeze, Mary Jane Watson, as is John Malkovich for the role of Norman Osborn, alias The Green Goblin. SPIDER-MAN is scripted by David Koepp (STIR OF ECHOES) and directed by Sam Raimi (ARMY OF DARKNESS). If Columbia's spider-sense is correct, and SPIDER-MAN is the big success they expect, the inevitable sequels will feature Spidey battling famous foes Doctor Octopus and Venom. In other Marvelous news, New Line Cinema is planning an IRON MAN feature to be written by Tim McCanlies, coscripter of last year's animated feature THE IRON GIANT.

Natasha Henstridge, who played the alluring alien Sil in the two SPECIES movies, has replaced an injured Courtney Love as the leading lady of John Carpenter's sci-fi thriller GHOSTS OF MARS. Director Carpenter cowrote the screenplay for this tale of Martian colonists who accidentally unleash ancient homicidal ghosts, who rise and possess the living. The Columbia release also stars Ice Cube as an outlaw pursued by frontier police-woman Henstridge. Also in the cast are Joanna Cassidy, Pam Grier, and Clea DuVall. Watch for this sci-fi horror hybrid in theaters next year.

TV Screams

American Movie Classics scares up another of their annual Monsterfests this Halloween, with Universal monsters taking center stage. Twenty-four classic Uni-

versal features are part of the five-day festival, including all four Kharis films, DRACULA'S DAUGHTER, WEREWOLF OF LONDON, the CREATURE trilogy, and the Spanish DRACULA. Hammer is well represented, too, with THE BRIDES OF DRACULA, REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN, CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB, and others. Giant-sized terrors GODZILLA, THEM!, and THE DEADLY MANTIS are on hand, as well as sci-fi favorites WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE THING, and THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. Tune your cable box to AMC from Friday, October 27 to Wednesday, November 1, and join in the monstrous fun.

Rudolf Martin, the German-born actor who portrayed Dracula in the season opener of BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER, will continue in the Dracula mold when he plays Vlad the Impaler in the USA Network telefilm DARK PRINCE: THE TRUE STORY OF DRACULA. The multilingual Martin, the former ALL MY CHILDREN actor who currently plays a Russian mobster in Showtime's BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS, will be joined in DARK PRINCE by Jane March, Roger Daltrey, and Peter Weller. Joe Chapelle (PHANTOMS) directed the Kushner-Locke production, which was shot on location in Transylvania and other parts of Romania. DARK PRINCE premieres on USA on Halloween night at 9:00pm and 1:00am Eastern Time.

THE X-FILES returns to the Fox network on November 5 for its eighth sea-

son. A discontented David Duchovny has negotiated to appear in only 11 episodes the first two, another three in mid-season, and the final—perhaps his very final—six shows. Fox Mulder's apparent alien abduction explains away his spotty appearances. The search for Mulder will be taken on by Agent Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson, of course) and by a new appointee, Agent John Doggett, played by Robert Patrick of T2 and FIRE IN THE SKY. Producer/creator Chris Carter will reportedly do more writing than usual for season eight, which promises to be more seriously scary and less comically quirky.

Viewers pining for NBC's canceled Saturday Thrillology shows can see repeat showings of THE PRETENDER, currently running on the TNT cable channel. Rumor has it that TNT will also produce two new PRETENDER telefilms this fall that will resolve the explosive cliffhanger that saw the principal characters seemingly perished. Meanwhile, another Thrillology show, PROFILER, has begun repeat showings on cable's Court TV. Now if only some channel will pick up repeats of The Hound's favorite Thrillology show, THE OTHERS

The Home Video Vault

The uncanny X-MEN feature film mutates onto VHS and DVD in November from Fox Home Entertainment. The special edition DVD (\$29.98) features lots of behind-the-scenes material, including Hugh

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SCREAMIN' FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

It didn't take very long for the backlash against the phenomenal success of the SCREAM films to become the perceived wisdom about these neo-slasher fright fests. Perceived wisdom and actual wisdom, however, are only occasionally the same thing. The trilogy—SCREAM (1996), SCREAM 2 (1997), and SCREAM 3 (2000)—puts such earlier series as the HALLOWEEN and FRIDAY THE 13TH films to shame, and recurring cast members Neve Campbell (Sidney Prescott), David Arquette (Deputy Dewey Riley), Courtney Cox (Gail Weathers), Jamie Kennedy (Randy Meeks), and Liev Schreiber (Cotton Weary) offer characterizations far richer than one expects to find in the genre. Well, they offer them as long as they survive, that is.

It isn't the self-referential tone of these pictures, in which killers and

potential victims all betray a sound knowledge of horror conventions, that set them apart, but the loopy characters themselves. In a fashion reminiscent of Armitstead Maupin's classic *Tales of the City* cast, but with a far bloodier body count, these Screamers live their lives as a daily soap opera fraught with unexpected dangers, and they keep parting and regrouping in a manner most Dickensian.

Dimension Home Video has released all three SCREAMs in a box set called THE ULTIMATE SCREAM COLLECTION (available for \$89.99). The transfers are excellent and the extras include audio commentary by director Wes Craven and screenwriter Kevin Williamson (SCREAM), trailers and TV spots (all three); outtakes, deleted scenes, and music videos (SCREAMs 2 and 3); and behind-the-scenes footage. A fourth disc, available only in the set, offers outtakes from SCREAM; screen tests for Neve Campbell, Jamie Kennedy, and Skeet Ulrich; a "cutting room" feature in which viewers can edit their own scene; and a documentary titled BEHIND THE SCREAM.

Also available (at \$89.99) is a box set of the three FROM DUSK TILL DAWN movies. Three, you ask? (You did ask, didn't you?) Yes, there were two direct-to-video followups (1999's FROM DUSK TILL DAWN 2: TEXAS BLOOD MONEY and 2000's FROM DUSK TILL DAWN 3: THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER) to the 1996 original, which starred George Clooney, Harvey Keitel, Juliette Lewis, and Quentin Tarantino. (Gee, remember him?) The original concerns two hardened criminals (Clooney and Tarantino) who hijack an RV and its owners (father Keitel, daughter Lewis, and son Ernest Liu) and make the mistake of hiding out in a Texas bar inhabited by vampires. The first sequel tells virtually the same story, and the second is actually a prequel set in Civil War days and features Michael Parks as the legendary writer Ambrose Bierce. The DUSK films are nowhere near as entertaining as the SCREAMs, but they're good for a night or three's entertainment. Extras include commentaries, outtakes, trailers, music videos, deleted scenes, cast and crew bios, and a featurette titled HOLLYWOOD GOES TO HELL—which should surprise nobody.

—Drew Sullivan

LEFT: George Clooney goes phallic in this poster from the 1996 vampire flick, FROM DUSK TILL DAWN. BELOW: Parker Posey, Courtney Cox, and David Arquette in SCREAM 3 (2000).





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USA Network's **DARK PRINCE**

NEWS HOUND

Continued from page 18

(Wolverine) Jackman's screen test and over 10 minutes of deleted footage

Also on DVD in November: **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 2: SPECIAL EDITION** (Paramount, \$29.99), with commentary by director John Woo and three production featurettes; **THE X-FILES** Collector's Edition: Season Two (Fox, \$149.98); **ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK** (MGM, \$19.98); and Jess Franco's gory 1979 thriller **JACK THE RIPPER** (Elite, \$24.95).

Currently available on Disney DVD is **THE FANTASIA ANTHOLOGY** (\$69.99), a three-disc Do-By Digital/DTS set containing **FANTASIA**, **FANTASIA 2000**, and a bonus disc with production featurettes, deleted scenes, and other background material. **FANTASIA** and **FANTASIA 2000** are also available individually on DVD for \$29.99 each, and **FANTASIA 2000** can be had on VHS for \$26.99.

THE X-FILES: FIGHT THE FUTURE (Fox) will be reissued on DVD in December, with DTS 5.1 and Dolby Digital stereo soundtracks and 16.9 anamorphic encoding. Also available in December on VHS and DVD are **The Harrison Ford, Michelle Pfeiffer** ghost thriller **WHAT LIES BENEATH** (DreamWorks), the horror spoof **SCARY MOVIE** (Miramax), **GODZILLA** 2000 (Columbia-TriStar), and (tentatively) Disney's animated epic **DINOSAUR**.

As per their usual, Anchor Bay has a fine slate of horror releases on DVD and VHS due for the coming year. Among their eight new Hammer Films titles is **SCARS OF DRACULA**, which on the DVD edition features a commentary by Christopher Lee and director Roy Ward Baker. Other new Hammer offerings are **BLOOD FROM THE MUMMY'S TOMB**, **DEMONS OF THE MIND**, **DR. JEKYLL AND SISTER HYDE**, **FEAR IN THE NIGHT**, **STRAIGHT ON TILL MORNING**, **LUST FOR A VAMPIRE**, and **TO THE DEVIL: A DAUGHTER**. Additional British horror releases from Anchor Bay for 2001 are **DARK EYES OF LONDON**, **THEATRE OF DEATH**, and **CIRCUS OF HORRORS**.

Internet reports say that A&E Home Video, suppliers of the terrific **AVENGERS** tapes and discs, plans next year to

begin releasing Gerry Anderson TV favorites **THUNDERBIRDS**, **UFO**, **STINGRAY**, and **SPACE: 1999**. Already available from A&E are the first six episodes of Patrick McGoohan's sci fi spy classic **THE PRISONER**. Two volumes are available on VHS for \$29.95 for each three-tape set. Each two-disc DVD volume costs \$39.98 and includes behind-the-scenes bonus material. And 13 episodes of **THE AVENGERS** '63 starring Honor Blackman are available as well, in two sets of tapes (\$29.95 each) or DVDs (\$44.95 each).

Fearsome Flotsam

In Scott Martin's stage spoof **SCREAM QUEENS—THE MUSICAL**, six shapely veterans of low-budget horror flicks strut their stuff in a musical revue presented at an imaginary horror convention. There's plenty of audience participation as the voluptuous vixens hijack spectators to participate in screaming contests and other antics. Writer/composer/lyricist Martin originated the show in Southern California in 1998 and is now working toward mounting productions in venues around the country. Visit the show's website at <http://geocities.com/Broadway/Wing/6366/>

And speaking of horror musicals . . . the granddaddy of them all, Richard O'Brien's **THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW**, is now on view at Broadway's Circle in the Square, where it's in previews prior to its official November opening. Featured in the cast are Tony winner Jarrod Emick (**DAMN YANKEES**) as Brad Majors, Alice Ripley (**SIDESHOW**) as Janet Weiss, Tony nominee Daphne Rubin-Vega (**RENT**) as Magenta, rocker Joan Jett as Columbia, singer/comedian Lea DeLaria as Eddie and Dr. Scott (!), newcomer Tom Hewitt as Frank-n-Furter, and Dick Cavett as the Narrator. It's just a jump to the left . . .

The Broadway musical **BAKER STREET**, starring Fritz Weaver as Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Inga Swenson as Irene Adler, Peter Sallis as Dr. Watson, and Martin Gable as Professor Moriarty, wasn't exactly a runaway hit in 1965, but it has its staunch defenders, not least among them this magazine's Crusading Reditor. The show has never been revived, but The York Theatre Company will be presenting a concert version on January 19, 20, and 21, 2001. Call 212-239-6200 for further details. The game's afoot!

Gone, but never to be forgotten: cartoonist Carl Barks, singer Paul Young, stuntmen Terry Forrestal and Eddie Powell, composer Jack Nitzsche, screenwriters Lucille Fletcher and Curt Siodmak, directors Joseph H. Lewis, Lee Sholem, and Don Weis, and actors Casey Adams (Max Showalter), Lois Collier, Sir Alec Guinness, Rose Hobart, Richard Farnsworth, Meredith MacRae, Joan Marsh, Tony McCoy, John Milford, Beah Richards, and *Scarlet Street* interviewee Ann Doran.

Send The Hound your questions, comments, and compliments via e-mail to TheNewsHound@yahoo.com.



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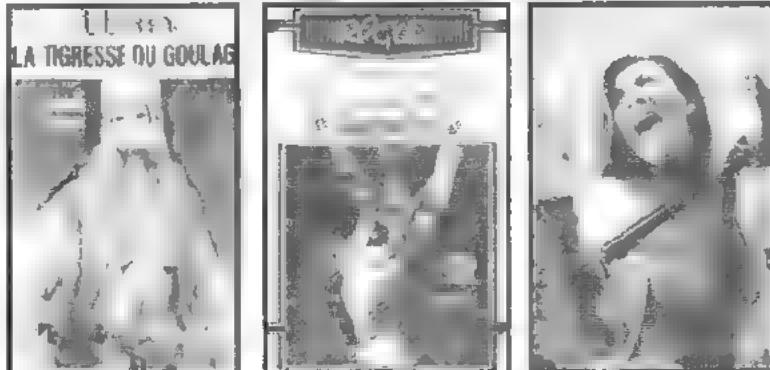
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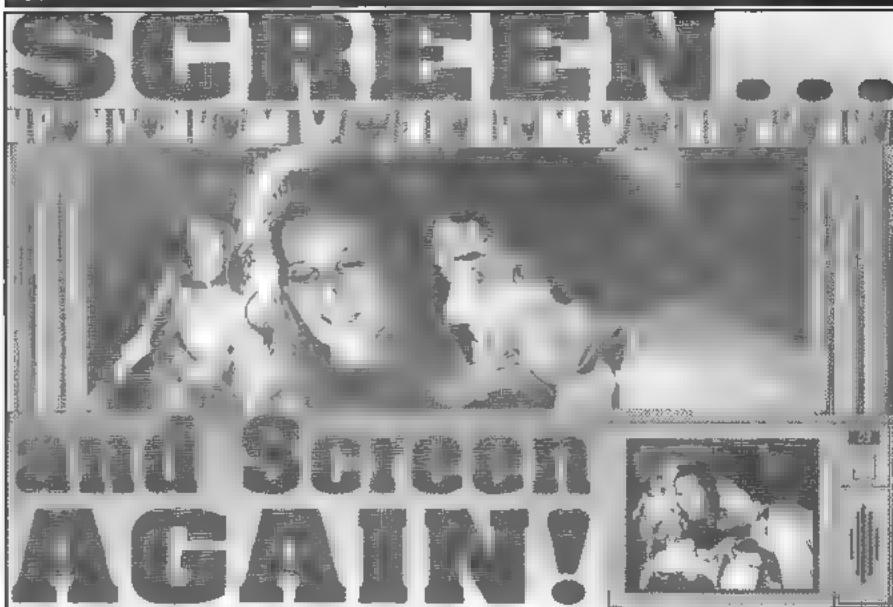
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Scarlet Street's DVD and Laser Review

Horror Express
Image Entertainment
\$24.99

Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee made their mark as masters of the macabre through a series of creepy collaborations for England's Hammer Films. From *THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1957) to *THE SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA* (1973), Hammer provided an eerie backdrop for the screen's prime practitioners of Gothic horror.

Hammer's chief British rival, Amicus Films, capitalized on the Cushing/Lee chemistry with its own sinister variations on the tried-and-true Hammer formula—but, remarkably, one of the duo's most entertaining and richly satisfying unions sprang not from the manor houses of Merry Old England, but from a remote, ramshackle studio in Madrid, Spain.

The long-overlooked *HORROR EXPRESS*—directed by Eugenio "Gene" Martin and released to scant acclaim in 1972—has evolved over the years into a cult classic. Poor quality prints of the film have plagued TV and video for 25 years.



Fortunately for fans, Image Entertainment has issued a classy new DVD edition of the film that restores its wide-screen look and digitally upgrades its sound and picture quality.

Foreshadowing the claustrophobic terror of *ALIEN* (1979) and the metaphysical mythology of television's *THE X-FILES*, the unique chiller blends traditional horror with speculative sci-fi. Admittedly, the script is punctured with plot holes. Under Martin's stylish direction, however, *HORROR EXPRESS* proves to be so exhilarating and unpredictable that its lapses in logic pass mercifully unnoticed.

The setting is Manchuria, 1906, where anthropologist Alexander Saxton (Lee, at his pompous, superior best) unearths the frozen body of a half-man, half-ape creature that could be the missing link. Saxton packs up his earth-shattering find and books passage on the Trans-Siberian Express. His fellow passengers include a good-natured rival, Dr. Wells (the incomparable Cushing, deftly stealing scene after scene).

While the train roars through the snow-covered Russian countryside, the seemingly dead "fossil"—possessed with an alien life force that lay dormant for centuries—awakens. The monster escapes and starts killing passengers, absorbing their knowledge and later hiding itself in human form. Meanwhile, Saxton and Wells—simultaneously fascinated and terrified by the creature's unearthly powers—join forces and begin playing a suspenseful cat-and-

mouse game to capture the diabolical being. Briefly joining the search is a ruthless Cossack (Telly Savalas, in a funny, scene-chewing guest role) who is determined to punish the killer.

The disc is smartly packaged with superb stills and scholarly liner notes by Marc Walkow, though fans will find few of the extras (trailers, documentaries, commentaries) that make DVDs so enticing to collectors. Supplements are limited to cast bios and chapter selections. Still, thanks to the Image restoration (part of the company's Euro-Shock Collection), *HORROR EXPRESS*—the warmest, most endearing pairing of Cushing and Lee, the cinema's only true heirs to the horror heritage of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi—now can be enjoyed in optimal condition as an uncanny blend of terror, wit and ingenuity.

—Terry Pace

NORTH BY NORTHWEST

Warner Home Video

\$24.98

Alfred Hitchcock's *NORTH BY NORTHWEST* (1959) represents the crown jewel of the filmmaker's oeuvre for many aficionados. The director previously concocted *THE 39 STEPS* (1935), *YOUNG AND INNOCENT* (1937), and *SABOTEUR* (1942), three dramas concerning ordinary men geographically fleeing from extraordinary circumstances. The 1959 adventure blends elements from the earlier pictures with a comparatively modern ambience. Cary Grant portrays Roger Thornhill, a Madison Avenue advertising executive mistaken by spies as being one "George Kaplan." Trouble is, "Kaplan" is a fictitious agent created by the Professor (Leo G. Carroll), head of a domestic intelligence agency. Thornhill unwittingly becomes a dupe in the Professor's strategy of diverting suspicion from his own highly-placed operative, Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint). Eve is masquerading as the mistress of Philip Vandamm (James Mason), a man spearheading the sale of government secrets for profit. The hapless Thornhill finds himself adrift in these convoluted cold-war machinations in which no one, least of all himself, is whom they appear to be.

The screenplay's tasty duplicity allows for memorable depictions of complex characters. Eve initially seduces the audience as well as Thornhill, until it's revealed that she's a pawn of Vandamm employing her sexuality to engineer the pitchman's doom. We then regard her as a monster, before learning that she's actually a double agent. She resultingly becomes sympathetic, as we realize that the American agency has pimped her to serve as Vandamm's mistress (who in turn has prostituted her to waylay "Kaplan"). Meanwhile, Vandamm himself maintains a suggestive posture with his gay "right arm," Leonard (Martin Landau). His relationships don't show Vandamm to be a man ruled by sentimentality, though, but rather demonstrate his willingness to employ bisexuality to bind his primary sub-

ordinates to him. Albert handsome and suave, his motivation remains the ruthless pursuit of his own ends. His hand, controllingly placed on Eve's shoulder during an art auction, icily retracts when "Kaplan" taunts him about her physical performance. It's a small gesture, but one akin to signing her death warrant.

Warner's DVD of *NORTH BY NORTHWEST* offers a definitive presentation. The color values are gorgeous for the most part, though flesh tones occasionally tend toward orange. The assorted men's business suits look monochromatically brilliant, and the sunset glimpsed during the train sequence is spectacularly hued. There are no stray markings or visual artifacts to detract from the overall impression. The image has been matted at nearly 1:85-1 to preserve the director's compositions. Bernard Herrmann's swirling fandangos sound robust, and are isolated on a separate music only track.

The disc also includes an array of supplements. Scenarist Ernest Lehman contributes a full-length audio commentary in which he genially describes his collaboration with Hitchcock, crediting Herrmann with bringing them together. Portions of his commentary are repeated in an accompanying 40-minute documentary about the film's production. Hostess Eva Marie Saint, Pat Hitchcock, Martin Landau, and art director Robert Boyle also share recollections in this all-too-

ter onscreen, or worse, two gay characters, or worse still, two gay characters kissing, for a collective groan and cruel laughter to issue from heterosexuals in the audience, who neither knew nor cared that, figuratively speaking, they were sticking a knife into the guy next to them.

Those times haven't entirely changed. Thousands of teenage girls tumbled into movie houses when *RIPLEY* opened, eager to see hunky heartthrob Matt Damon. They were considerably less eager to learn that the character he played, Tom Ripley, was a repressed gay man in love with Dickie Greenleaf, a character played by freshly-minted hunky heartthrob Jude Law. When the truth finally, dimly dawned, girlish groans arose—but they were followed almost immediately by cries from the rest of the audience to one, grow up, and two, shut up.

Satisfactory, as Nero Wolfe would put it.

THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY is based on the 1955 suspense novel of the same name by Patricia Highsmith, whose *Strangers on a Train* (1950) became one of Alfred Hitchcock's greatest hits. The novel was previously filmed as *PURPLE NOON* (1960), with Alain Delon as Ripley, Highsmith's sociopath of all trades. Damon can't match Delon in the looks department, but his boyish gawkishness makes it believable that Ripley not only loves Dickie, but longs to be him—which he accomplishes through the simple act of murder. The rest of the film is an elaborate game of cat and mouse, with Ripley being Dickie to some and Ripley to others, and several bystanders—including Dickie's fiancee, Marge Sherwood (Gwyneth Paltrow)—coming dangerously close to the truth.

Paramount's letterboxed DVD presentation has a wealth of extras, including interviews with the cast and crew, a featurette (*INSIDE THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*), music videos (Damon sings "My Funny Valentine," pleasantly), trailers, and an audio commentary by director Anthony Minghella. At the Academy Awards, *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY* was all but ignored by Oscar. Don't fall into that trap yourself....

—Richard Valley



brief anecdotal feature. The DVD concludes with a stills gallery and three trailers, one of which is a typically droll Hitchcock travelogue teaser.

—John F. Black

THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY

Paramount

\$29.99

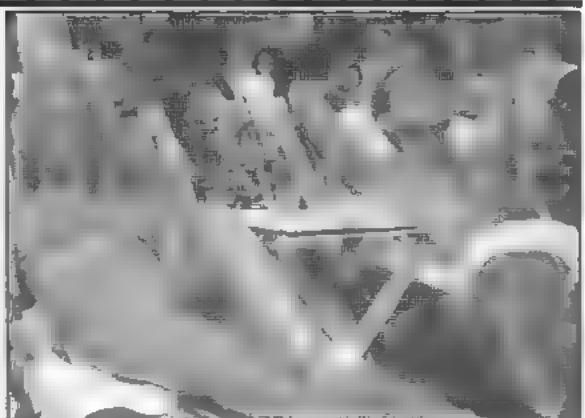
"How far would you go to become someone else?"—that was the tagline for *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY* (1999) when it opened last year. There was a time when gay moviegoers knew exactly how far they'd go—right out of the theater. All it took was the appearance of a gay charac-

4D MAN

Image Entertainment

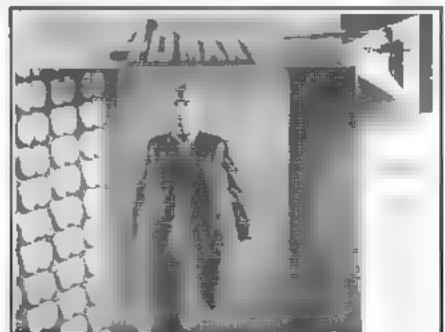
\$24.99

Tony Nelson (James Congdon), a determined, young scientist, is consumed by a fantastic theory: if the energy of years can be compressed into a moment, an object can be moved into the fourth dimension. To prove his theory, he develops an atomic force field that enables him to penetrate a solid metal block with an ordinary pencil. Unfortunately, Tony discovers that it was not the molecular structures of the wood or metal that were al-



tered by the field, but he himself! His brain waves, amplified by the field, willed the two substances together.

Tony presents his findings to his brother, Scott (Robert Lansing), a brilliant research scientist who is even more intense and driven. Scott is initially disinterested in Tony's experiment, but when credit for his own revolutionary scientific achievements is stolen from him and his girlfriend, Linda (provocatively portrayed by Lee Meriwether), falls for Tony, the dejected Scott decides to explore his brother's theory. Exposed to the force field, Scott's incredibly powerful brain waves—which cause him blinding headaches—become so highly amplified that his entire cell structure is altered. He gains the ability to walk through walls, doors, bank vaults, anything, but his new power has a horrible side-effect: Using it hugely consumes his energy, causing his



body to rapidly age. Only by taking the life force from another human being can he survive. Instead of leading mankind into the fourth dimension, Scott finds that he is instead trapped in it as a 4D vampire!

4D MAN is an efficient sci-fi thriller that impressively recycles the familiar genre theme of science gone wrong. The story echoes *THE INVISIBLE MAN* (1933) and *THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT* (1956). In a vignette in which a desirous Scott hungrily watches a sleeping Linda, an eerily lit Lansing evokes Christopher Lee in *HORROR OF DRACULA* (1958). Earnest performances by the cast, particularly Lansing, enhance the fantastic plot with an essential integrity.

Image Entertainment offers a satisfactory, full-frame print evincing occasional blemishes. Its crystal-clear transfer vi-

brantly exhibits the bold colors and loud tones of cinematographer Theodore J. Pahle's strikingly fluorescent palette and flagrantly flaunts the noticeable mascara adorning Lansing's deep-set eyes. Ralph S. Carmichael's cool-cat jazz score (riffs of which were clearly lifted in Ray Ellis' hip theme for the 1967 cartoon series *THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN*) really swings on the Dolby monaural soundtrack. No special features are included . . . at least on the DVD in *this dimension*

Michael Anthony Carlisle

MARNIE
Universal Home Video

\$29.98

Alfred Hitchcock's "sex mystery" *MARNIE* (1964) remains his most controversial production. The majority of the film's themes are eloquently expressed in two lengthy bookend sequences in which Marnie Edgar (Tippi Hedren) confronts her troubled, emotionally withdrawn mother, Bernice (Louise Latham). Considered together, the scenes begin and end symmetrically with the symbolic children's rhyme "Mother, Mother, I Am Ill..." The actresses superbly display a palpable



ebb and flow of repression and outburst. Together, they create a catharsis unequalled in the director's canon.

What of the remaining plot? To paraphrase Hitchcock's droll response to an earnest question regarding his cinematic use of stairways, "It gets one from here to there." Sean Connery skillfully enacts Mark Rutland, an employer whose penchant for animal behaviorism becomes aroused on recognizing Marnie as a repeat-offending thief. His vaguely cynical manipulation of marriage with her never quite reveals whether he's motivated by true love or simple fascination. That quality of ambivalence would seem the bane of Marnie's existence. Her own mother, in the first of their two scenes, was only able to express affection for her through displacement, lavishing attention on a glib neighborhood girl who represents a surrogate younger Marnie.

MARNIE's detractors often cite Hitchcock's use of such obviously expressionistic devices as matte paintings and repetitive red tinting as being "lazy." However, those simple techniques suggest clues about the principal character that she herself cannot reveal, due to her unconscious state of mind. The static images of Marnie's back-street family home imply a paralysis of memory and emotion. Contrastingly, the subliminal red bursts betray a simultaneous need to confront her past trauma. Bernard Herrmann's inflamed score grants voice to her unrealized conflict.

Universal's DVD offers an evocative transfer that preserves the 1.85:1 aspect ratio. Although not as robust as the studio's recent disc of *THE BIRDS* (1963), the colors accurately reflect the original theatrical presentation. The contrast between the body of the narrative and *MARNIE*'s visually washed-out climactic flashback is dramatic, insinuating that she still needs to filter the intensity of her onrushing recollections. That impression is more strongly realized on the DVD than previous television and video versions.

A 58-minute documentary, *THE TROUBLE WITH MARNIE*, addresses the controversy regarding its production history and cumulative effect. Other than Connery, many surviving cast and crew members have participated. The under-rated Louise Latham finally earns some deserved acclaim, disclosing that she also portrayed the younger Bernice in the revelatory flashback. For those who hadn't suspected, a great performance becomes even greater! The disc also offers the original trailer, production notes and an extensive photo gallery.

—John F. Black

**VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM
OF THE SEA/FANTASTIC VOYAGE**
20th Century Fox

\$24.98

Here's a perfect double feature for those of you who couldn't get away this past summer. Journey under the polar ice cap in *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA* (1961), the Irwin Allen feature that inspired his hit TV show and established him as the boob tube's leading purveyor of sci-fi fantasy in the early sixties. Marvel as the very sky burns red and our intrepid band of heroes, led by Walter Pidgeon and including Joan Fontaine, Robert Sterling, Barbara Eden, Peter Lorre, and Frankie Avalon, battle incredible odds to save our planet, even as one of their own plots to sabotage their efforts. See Lorre walk a live shark! Watch Eden jiggle her assets! Hear Avalon sing the catchy title tune *Wonder* if life on this island earth is worth saving!

Actually, *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA* is a marvelously entertaining movie—not a film, but a good, old-fashioned, get-out-the-popcorn movie. The CinemaScope feature is presented widescreen, and the sharp, perfectly-balanced colors fairly leap off the screen. The script is by Allen and Hitchcock veteran

Charles Bennett, previously teamed on 1957's *THE STORY OF MANKIND*, 1959's *THE BIG CIRCUS*, and 1960's *THE LOST WORLD*. The supporting cast includes such familiar Hollywood faces as Regis Toomey, Howard McNear, Michael Ansara, and John Litel. (For more on Litel, see this issue's examination of 1939's *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X*.) In a brief but



showy turn, Henry Daniell, who, along with George Zucco and Lionel Atwill, once played Professor Moriarty opposite Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes, plays a stuffy scientist named—Zucco!

Companion feature *FANTASTIC VOYAGE* (1966), which also receives the full letterboxed treatment, is perhaps the better known flick, but it isn't quite as much fun as a deep sea dive in the Seaview. The premise is certainly original for its time, though, as Stephen Boyd, Raquel Welch, and Donald Pleasence (among others) are shrunk to microscopic size and enter a full-sized human's bloodstream in a teensy-weensy minisub. Their mission is to save the man's life via daring surgery, but they must battle tremendous odds and antibodies even as one of their own plots to sabotage—hey, it's *deja vu* all over again!

Drew Sullivan

WHITE ZOMBIE
The Roan Group

\$24.95

Featuring Bela Lugosi at his most Mephistophelean, the Halperin Brothers' *WHITE ZOMBIE* (1932) is one of the most visually stylized horror films of the early sound era.

Prior to the Roan Group's 1995 laser-disc edition, *WHITE ZOMBIE* languished in that netherworld of public domain 16mm dupes. For the film's DVD debut, Roan has undertaken further restoration of this pervasively macabre, operatic drama. Though still rife with splices, Roan's *WHITE ZOMBIE* is nothing less than a revelation. The improved transfer reveals previously obscured textures and critical details, such as the star filter gleam in Lugosi's eye as he mesmerizes an adversary, or the clover/cruciform pat-

tern on Madge Bellamy's gown, which echoes the stone lattice that vignettes her descent down a staircase left over from Universal's *DRACULA* (1931).

While the music is as tunny as ever, the lower noise floor makes the grueling sound effects in the "mill of the damned" sequence all the more chilling. The DVD possesses the additional asset of a commentary by Lugosi scholar Gary Don Rhodes, which, while adhering closely to onscreen action, strikes a deliberate balance of production history and analysis. To revisit *WHITE ZOMBIE* with such an



informed and insightful guide is to experience it anew.

— Michael Draine

KRAKATOA: EAST OF JAVA Anchor Bay Entertainment

\$19.95

Famous for the inaccuracy of its title, *KRAKATOA: EAST OF JAVA*, received its share of ridicule back in 1969 from those aware that the volcanic island of Krakatoa was, in fact, *west* of Java. Having failed this geography course, it was up to the filmmakers to come up with a smashing adventure that would make audiences forget such a faux pas, something that TV director Bernard L. Kowalski didn't quite pull off.

Set in the late 19th century, the bulk of the film takes place aboard the Batavia Queen, a vessel bound for the West Indies on a salvage expedition. Captain Hanson (Maximilian Schell) is joined by his lover, Laura (Diane Baker), who knows the approximate whereabouts of her husband's sunken ship, somewhere near Krakatoa, on which sits an angry volcano, threatening to blow its top at any minute. Also on hand are Harry Connerly (Brian Keith), a once-noted deep sea diver who is now a laudanum addict; Douglas Rigby (John Leyton), who has created a Jules Verne-like diving bell, despite being claustrophobic; Toshi (Jacqui Chan) who leads a team of attractive Asian diving experts who apparently have gills, since they stay under water

without air tanks as long as Connerly does with one, and a father-and-son team of Italian balloonists, Giovanni and Leoncavallo Borghese (Rossano Brazzi and Sal



Mineo). Just to make sure there's some added tension on board, Captain Hanson is forced to transport a team of scruffy convicts as well.

Everyone is introduced in an uninspired, cliché-ridden fashion during the first hour, making for rather slow going. Since this film was trimmed by approximately a half-hour after its initial 136-minute Cinerama engagements, you might find yourself, during the early stages of the story, hoping that the DVD version is the shorter print. It isn't. Baker tries to give the storyline some dramatic substance, ringing out the tears over a mother (Laura) torn from her young son. Barbara Werle acts amateurishly as Keith's girlfriend and sings an incongruous song that seems more suited for the film adaptation of *PAINT YOUR WAGON* while Mineo has virtually no part to play as the sullen, younger balloon expert.

However, once the principals arrive at Krakatoa, things get a bit more interesting, with the special effects team (who received an Oscar nomination for their efforts) working overtime to provide thundering explosions, narrow escapes both above and below the water, and an impressive tidal wave.

The DVD is letterboxed, allowing the attractively photographed epic to be seen as it should be, and the enclosed booklet contains a brief but interesting summary of the impact the real Krakatoa eruption had back in 1883. Unfortunately, the disc does not include the frequently-played television ad from the original release, nor is any mention made of what was excised for the film's shorter edition or of the title change for TV to the factually safer, but far less memorable *VOLCANO*.

Barry Monush

SUDDEN FEAR Kino on Video

\$29.95

The DVD release of the 1952 *film noir* *SUDDEN FEAR* is a revelation. The disc, which divides the film into 17 chapters, features excellent sound and picture. The soundtrack is clear and free of static, just as it should be in such a tense story involving stretches of silence and secrets revealed when a dictating recorder is

played back. The picture is so sharp that one can enjoy the full effects of the skillful lighting of Joan Crawford's eyes or part of a letter. One can even see every bead of perspiration on Crawford's brow as *SUDDEN FEAR* hurtles toward its jolting conclusion.

In this outstanding entry in the subcategory of "I think my husband is trying to kill me" melodramas, Crawford is playwright Myra Hudson, a fabulously wealthy San Francisco heiress who nevertheless yearns "to stand on my own two feet and make my place in the world." A young Jack Palance displays sinister charm as Lester Blaine, an actor whom Myra fires but who later becomes her husband after playing his greatest role—that of suitor—on a transcontinental train trip. Myra is blissfully happy with Blaine until she overhears a recorded conversation between Blaine and his girlfriend, Irene Neves (Gloria Grahame). Blaine and Irene plan to murder Myra over the weekend, before she can sign a new will giving most of her vast fortune to charity. This DVD effectively delivers the all-important picture and sound in the stunning scene in which Myra, with increasingly panicked body language, listens to the devastating truth about Lester on her (for 1952) ultramodern dictaphone.

For this and many other scenes, Joan Crawford received a well-deserved Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. For only his third screen appearance, Jack Palance received an equally deserved Os-



car nomination for Best Supporting Actor. Ironically, Gloria Grahame won the 1952 Oscar for Supporting Actress—but for *THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL*!

SUDDEN FEAR succeeds as a *film noir*, a women's melodrama, and a time capsule of the clothes, music, and mores of the early fifties. A half-century later, this DVD release presents director David Miller's nail-biter in fine form. Note to *MANNIX* fans: keep an eye out for Michael "Touch" Connors, who makes his screen debut here.

—Jeff Thompson

MASTERWORKS OF THE GERMAN HORROR CINEMA

Elite Entertainment
\$54.95

The generation of German artists that came of age in the years just before World War I created a visual vocabulary for the passions and terrors of their time in a culturally pervasive movement called Expressionism. Reaching the cinema in 1920 with Robert Weine's *DAS CABINET DES DR. CALIGARI*, the Expressionist conception of art as the embodiment of an inner reality dovetailed neatly with the alienation and intimations of madness implicit in the horror tale. This double-DVD combines *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* with two German Expressionist films pivotal to the genesis of the horror genre, Paul Wegener and Carl Boese's *THE GOLEM* (1920) and F.W. Murnau's *NOSFERATU* (1922).

These three films are so steeped in myth and fable that they seem impossibly old, like materializations of some medieval imagination. Each unfolds in a sort



of dream world, where cause and effect intermingle, where the symbolic and the representational are indistinguishable.

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI is the story of several individuals' encounter with the uncanny. Francis (Friedrich Feher) and Alan (Hans Heinz von Twardowski) cross over from the mundane world of student life to the criminal realm of the sideshow, where they encounter Dr. Caligari (Werner Krauss) and his somnambulist Cesare (Conrad Veidt). Cesare's power to foretell the future derives from the realm of dreams and the unconscious: to bid Cesare's prophecy is to be drawn into Dr. Caligari's dark circle, where repressed desires are acted upon, where one's fears take form.

Not as sharp as the tinted version issued by Image Entertainment on LD and DVD, this 16mm print of *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* (with a 1952 copyright date) documents how the film was presented to venturesome audiences in art houses and cinéclubs in the fifties and

sixties. The mono library music is surprisingly apt in places, such as the scene in which the student Alan is lured to his doom by the sound of carnival music.

THE GOLEM (screen title: *DER GOLEM WIE ER IN DIE WELT KAM*, or "The Golem How He Came into the World") was inspired by a Hebrew folktale discovered by actor/codirector Paul Wegener during production of *THE STUDENT OF PRAGUE* (1913). Taciturn and implacable in the role of the earthen automaton, Paul Wegener moves with an imposing, inexorable momentum that doesn't come through in still photographs. With its biomorphic architecture and twisted, craggy landscapes, *THE GOLEM* is, like *CALIGARI*, an essential antecedent to James Whale's *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931).

Even theatrical prints of *THE GOLEM* suffer from vertical scratches, softness, and excessive contrast. This is the first video edition to capture the nuances of the film's dramatic play of light, shadow, and smoke, photographed by the great Karl Freund.

Elite has procured the sharpest-grained, most richly textured print of F.W. Murnau's *NOSFERATU* (full title: *NOSFERATU: EINE SYMPHONIE DES GRAUENS*, or "Nosferatu: A Symphony of Terror") to reach home video. It's nothing less than exhilarating to finally make out the Kabbalistic glyphs in the communiques between the Count and Renfield, and examine scene-to-scene variations in Max Schreck's vampire makeup. Peter Schurmann's keening chamber score aptly intensifies the film's air of *fin de siècle* decadence.

Sound-speed projection (dutifully noted on the box) results in *CALIGARI* clocking in 51 minutes, *NOSFERATU* at 64 minutes and *DER GOLEM* at 68 minutes. Each feature is granted a separate side; supplements consist of a few stills and poster art for each film, plus a three-minute clip from *CENUINE* (1920), Robert Weine's followup to *CALIGARI*. A 12-page booklet with a superb essay by Miroslaw Lipinski accompanies the set.

The power of Expressionism is the power of the irrational; subject matter which strains the limits of reason has the potential to bypass conscious barriers, to touch those deep wellsprings from which our dreams, fears, and darkest imaginings flow. It is in this fashion that such psychologically opaque characters as Dr. Caligari, Nosferatu, and the Golem are imbued with such salience, such inexplicable resonance.

—Michael Draine

THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE

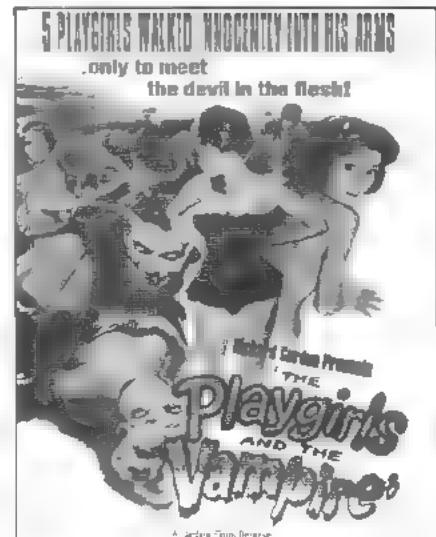
Image Entertainment
\$19.99

Shot in Italy in 1960, writer-turned-director Piero Regnoli's *L'ULTIMA PREDA DEL VAMPIRO* wasn't released in the United States until acquired by Richard Gordon in 1964. Advertised as an "Adults Only" picture, the film contained a high-

lighted shot of a bare breasted female vampire who uses her body to entice her victims. (That they scream in fear rather than sway with desire should say something about her wily charms.)

THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE concerns a busload of show girls stranded during a thunderstorm at the sinister castle of Count Kernassy (Walter Brandi). He initially doesn't want them to stay, until he realizes that one (Lyla Rocco) is a dead ringer for the woman his vampire ancestor (also played by Brandi) loved 200 years before. Replete with all the clichés one would expect from a Gothic horror film (crashing thunderstorms, cobwebbed castles, dank vaults, and moldering tombs), Piero Regnoli's second feature is a letdown. Virtually the entire first hour goes by with little or no action, the first actual vampire (Maria Giovannini), teeth bared, appears a little over 50 minutes into the movie and disappears just as fast as she appeared. Too bad, too, the dialogue up until that point certainly can't save the movie, despite the fact that Regnoli had previously written *I, VAMPIRI* (1957), nor can the climactic fight sequence between Brandi, Brandi, and Rocco. The special effects—Giovannini being staked through the heart with a torch, as well as a cheap imitation of the climax from Hammer's *HORROR OF DRACULA* (1958)—are terrible, as is the editing. The comic relief, provided by a goofy dance instructor, is merely foolish.

Despite its minor nudity, this feature seems far more juvenile than concurrent



horror fare such as Mario Bava's *BLACK SUNDAY* (1960) or Camillo Mastrocinque's *TERROR IN THE CRYPT* (1964). Women parade their bodies for the benefit of heterosexual male audiences, yet the film never directly challenges the viewers' thoughts on human sexuality. Is the film erotic? No. Is the film scary? No. Is the film entertaining? Hardly. It's pretty sad when the best thing one can say is that the dubbing is better.

than usual for this type of Americanized feature.

Image Entertainment's DVD has considerable audio hiss, particularly during the credits and the film's final reel. The transfer presents a far superior, cleaned-up print than previous syndicated TV prints (usually running under the title *CURSE OF THE VAMPIRE*). As an extra, the disc contains the theatrical trailer, which you won't want to watch first. It only makes the movie look more entertaining than it really is, and you may find it even harder to sit through. The informative liner notes were written by Tim Lucas. If only he'd provided audio commentary instead, it would have given us something to do for an hour or so.

—Chris Workman

FADE TO BLACK

Anchor Bay Entertainment

\$24.98

FADE TO BLACK (1980) came out during the great slasher era of the early eighties and, unlike the innumerable bad films of that genre, focuses its story on the killer and how he got that way. Dennis Christopher (hot off the success of 1979's *BREAKING AWAY*, in which he played a



fresh-faced, clean-cut teenager) gives an intense performance as Eric Binford, a loser so obsessed with movies that he loses his grip on reality, becomes obsessed with a woman (Gwynne Gilford) who resembles Marilyn Monroe (Eric regularly masturbates to images of MM), and starts acting like Dracula, the Mummy, and Cody Jarrett, with murderous results. That Eric is obsessed with classic movies makes it a blast for film buffs to watch.

The DVD comes in a keepcase that features Eric's most elaborate disguises on its cover. The synopsis on the back refers to Eric as the "Celluloid Killer," a name not mentioned anywhere in the film. Inside is a four-page booklet sporting the original one-sheet artwork, the chapter selections, background information on director Vernon Zimmerman, star Dennis Christopher, and just about every cast member (with the glaring absence of a young Mickey Rourke), plus a fun list of the trivia questions with which Eric taunts other characters. The disc itself has a colorful face featuring more shots of Eric's disguises. The release has a clever main menu, with sound, featuring Eric putting

on his Dracula makeup. The only supplement on the disc is a letterboxed (about 1.85) trailer that is in quite good shape.

The film is generously divided into 28 chapters and is letterboxed to about 1.85. Comparing this print to the original 1981 Media Home Entertainment VHS highlights several interesting differences. First and foremost is that the VHS print opened the frame to fill the 3:4 television ratio rather than cutting the sides off, thus revealing a lot of information on the top and bottom of the screen—including the film's shower scene nudity, which is lost on the DVD. The disc's matting greatly improves the framing of the image, presenting a much more polished film, but the video's opened frame shows more details, including the items in Eric's room. As expected, the DVD's image is much clearer, utilizing a sharp, solid print that shows more detail in the shadows and background. However, comparatively, the colors on the two prints are quite different. The VHS is too blue, giving the L.A. sky a much healthier, vivid color, but flesh tones appear cold and washed out. The DVD is too red, giving everything a reddish/sepia tone, including the black-and-white films Eric watches on his 16mm projector. The DVD sound is in Dolby Digital mono and features more bass than the VHS.

Comparing the two, it is difficult to say which is better. The ultimate FADE TO BLACK DVD would have to feature both the original 1.85 matted and full screen open-matted versions, along with a color corrected version of the DVD print.

Jeff Allen

KEY LARGO

Warner Home Video

\$19.98

John Huston directs a stellar cast in KEY LARGO, a classic 1948 thriller based (very loosely) on a Maxwell Anderson play. Humphrey Bogart is Frank McCloud, who just happens to arrive on one of the Florida keys at the wrong time. Along with hotel owner Nora Temple (sultry Lauren Bacall) and her invalid father in law (wheelchair-bound Lionel Barrymore) McCloud is held hostage by mobster Johnny Rocco (Edward G Robinson) and his goons (including heavyweights Dan Seymour and Thomas Gomez).

Rocco is trapped, too, by a sudden hurricane, and is forced to wait out the storm before he can put his plan to sneak back into the United States (he was deported) into operation. Amusing himself, Rocco torments McCloud and his unwilling hosts, and reserves some of his more brutal taunts for his alcoholic girlfriend, Gaye (Claire Trevor in an Oscar-winning performance). The scene in which Rocco



forces Gaye to sing is so brutal as to be almost painful to watch.

Rocco refers to McCloud as "Soldier" (he's an ex-military man who has seen too much death, and now just wants to be left alone) and tries to egg him into taking action, which McCloud refuses to do. Offering him a gun, abusing others, even kissing Nora—noting moves McCloud to action. This is Bogie, however, and, as in CASABLANCA (1942) and so many other films, Bogie will only take so much and no more. The final minutes of the film take place on a small boat, with McCloud forced to play captain and taking matters into his own hands at last.

The print is very sharp and crisp (Catch the shot near the end, when Bacall opens the window to allow the sun to shine into the room and the lights inside dim, it's a dazzling image.). The DVD is given a very generous 32 chapter stops. The remaining extras are slight: a list of cast and crew (misspelling Bacall's name!), the original theatrical trailer, and a brief text-driven behind-the-scenes f.e. It's the film itself, though, that makes the disc worth buying. It's a worthwhile addition to anyone's classic film collection.

—Kevin G. Shinnick

PEPPING TOM

The Criterion Collection

\$39.95

It has become redundant to say that any film released by The Criterion Collection is the best it has ever looked, the supplements groundbreaking, intelligent, and informative, and the presentation to-the-point and attractive. Trying not to sound too much like a salesman, anything that bears The Criterion Collection banner should be immediately snapped up by the collector and treasured.

The DVD release of Michael Powell's notorious masterpiece PEPPING TOM (1960) is another cause for celebration. Powell's compelling story is a take on voyeurism and an audience's taste for violence. The subject of his father's twisted psychological experiments on fear, Mark Lewis (Carl Boehm) grows up with the desire to further his father's work. He does this by filming women as he impales them with his camera tripod!

Presented in its original 1:66 ratio, the only complaint anyone might have would be with the opening "Anglo Amalgamated" title card, which is a bit heavy on grain. The film itself is gorgeous, starting right from the opening scene of the darkened street illuminated only by pools of blood-red light. The color is lush and vibrant and the image sharp. There are a few spots that have slight speckling (mostly during reel changes), but they are minimal and rarely noticeable. The sound is crisp and strong presented in its original mono. Criterion has broken the film into 27 chapters and titled them very identifiably.

The supplements on the disc are, as usual, very nicely done. A gallery of 56 excellent black and white stills are presented with interesting captions from the film's original publicity campaign. The original 2 minute, 26 second trailer is presented letterboxed to 1:66 and while it shows more grain than the film and has quite a bit of speckling on the source print, it looks and sounds excellent. A feature-length audio commentary by film theorist Laura Mulvey is the weakest part of the disc. While the talk is informative, Ms. Mulvey tends to describe what is on screen far too much and over all has a very dry presentation.

The jewel of the supplements is easily Christopher Rodley's spectacular 50 min-



(1964)—IS WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE? (1969), produced by Aldrich's company but directed by Lee H. Katzin. The Arizona desert creates a beautiful, serene background in contrast to the malevolent deeds of Mrs. Marrable (Geraldine Page). Alone and destitute after her husband's death, and used to a lifestyle that is now well beyond her means, Claire Marrable solicits the company of single, older women to live in her house as housekeepers and provide companionship. Of course, she makes certain that she hires women of rather comfortable means, who are financially able to take care of themselves while in her employ, women who might be willing to empty their bank accounts and let Mrs. Marrable invest their money, women who, after a time, disappear even as another tree is planted in Mrs. Marrable's garden. . .

It isn't until Mrs. Alice Dimmock (the seemingly indestructible Ruth Gordon) arrives that Mrs. Marrable finds a housekeeper whose company she truly likes, once she might even be willing to let live. Mrs. Dimmock, however, has other plans, since her employer's last victim (Mildred Dunnock) was once her own companion.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE is a wonderful blend of mystery and horror, greatly enhanced by Gerald Fried's musical score. Fried's use of violins lends a mystical, eerie quality to the entire film. Anchor Bay Entertainment's DVD is letterboxed (1.85:1) and contains only one special feature, a theatrical trailer. The film transfer is clear and crisp and the audio is well balanced.

—Dan Clayton

THE INDIAN TOMB

Image Entertainment

\$29.98

Silent film flourished in Germany in the years after World War I, and one of its most spectacular productions was THE INDIAN TOMB (1921). This two-part, 212-minute epic features a stunning performance from 27-year-old Conrad Veidt as the cruel yet lovelorn Prince Ayan, the Rajah of Bengal. Directed by Joe May from a scenario by Thea von Harbou and

Fritz Lang, THE INDIAN TOMB is massive in every sense, but especially in its physical setting. Huge, ornate palaces and temples and wide landscapes dominate the visuals, but they prove no match for the intensity of Conrad Veidt.

THE INDIAN TOMB opens with Ayan summoning the yogi Ramigani (Bernhard Goetzke) out of a mystic suspended animation. Ayan assigns Ramigani a mission fetch back to Bengal the English architect Herbert Rowland (Olaf Fønss) in order to design and build a tomb for his wife, the faithless—but still living—Savitri (Erna Morena). Ramigani accomplishes this task through magical means, but Herbert's fiancée, the plucky Irene (Mia May, wife of the director) refuses to accept his sudden disappearance and tracks him to Bengal. She soon meets Ayan and demands to see Herbert, he refuses, she searches Ayan's palace for her fiancé, Herbert spots her from a window . . . and then the plot really thickens. There are chases over land and river, people eating tigers and crocodiles, afflictions of leprosy, Ayan's attempted seduction of Irene in a gorgeously lit temple scene (only Veidt could carry off with dignity the bizarre attire and heavy makeup he wears in this sequence), and an unexpected, ironic finale that illustrates the film's theme of the inevitability of fate. May is earthy, Fønss is stolid, the story bogs down at times, but then Veidt always arrives to inject energy into the proceedings. The more quiet and still he gets, the more he dominates the screen—it's an astonishing performance.

THE INDIAN TOMB languished in obscurity after its 1921 premiere until a restoration by the Munich Filmmuseum received a highly-acclaimed screening at the 1996 Pordenone Silent Film Festival. It now arrives on VHS and DVD in a second restoration, prepared by David Shep-



ard of Film Preservation Associates for video release.

The DVD is a joy to watch. Although there are some speckles and lines due to the age of the print materials, the underlying image is generally crystal clear and it's easy to make out the exquisite detail-



ute, 30 second documentary A VERY BRITISH PSYCHO. Focusing on the life of screenwriter Leo Marks, it engrossingly tells the history of how PEEPING TOM came to be and the aftermath of its release. Featuring on-camera interviews with the late Michael Powell and current interviews with stars Carl Boehm, Anna Massey and Columba Powell, this documentary is one of the most engaging, informative and entertaining making-ofs yet put on disc. Criterion has even broken the documentary up into 13 chapters. Another nice feature from the standard setters for all DVDs.

—Jeff Allen

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE?

Anchor Bay Entertainment

\$24.98

Lost among director/producer Robert Aldrich's better known modern Gothic horrors, namely WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? (1962) and HUSH . . . HUSH . . . SWEET CHARLOTTE

ing of the sets and costumes. The tints—lavender, pale teal, pale sepia—are lovely and most unusual. The title cards, derived from the French print that served as Shepard's principal source, are also one of this restoration's great pleasures. Tinted pink, they are illustrated with beautiful scrollwork and art, and the new English translations by Ulrich Ruedel. Eric Behrheim has compiled a superb score from both traditional silent music sources and European classical music inspired by oriental motifs. A film this big calls for full orchestral accompaniment, but Behrheim's synthesizer, with its string, woodwind, brass, and percussion modes, is a most effective substitute. The only musical misfire is in the temple scene, which calls for something hushed and mystical but instead offers a cue more suitable for an action sequence. The DVD offers no supplements (apart from a chapter index), although there are some brief but informative notes on the back of the case.

THE INDIAN TOMB is essential viewing for those interested in epics, silent film, or representations of the "exotic" East in European cinema. It is a must-see for Veidt aficionados, but even more important viewing for those who remember him primarily as Major Strasser in *CASABLANCA* (1942). **THE INDIAN TOMB** reveals precisely why Conrad Veidt was one of the most popular actors in German silent cinema.

—Paula Vitaris

NIGHT OF THE HUNTER

MGM Home Entertainment

\$24.95

Perhaps the most egregious, unpardonable sin committed by the American Film Institute when it issued its list of 100 Greatest American Movies was its shameful omission of **THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER**, the 1955 macabre masterpiece directed by Charles Laughton. After it flopped at the box office, Laughton, lamentably, never again directed another movie, a great tragedy for American cinema because he exquisitely demonstrated that motion pictures could be not only art but also fine art.

An elegantly crafted, richly stylish grim fairy tale about two children terrorized by a maniac, **HUNTER** headlines Robert Mitchum's tour-de-force turn as the psychotic preacher, Harry Powell. His eccentric characterization harmoniously fits Laughton's flamboyant filmmaking style and is perfectly balanced by the stoic performance of Lillian Gish as Powell's saintly nemesis, Miss Cooper.

Cinematographer Stanley Cortez, art director Hilyard Brown, set decorator Al Spencer, and the special photographic effects team of Jack Rabin and Louis DeWitt superbly succeeded in realizing Laughton's Expressionistic vision, making **HUNTER** a textbook study of filmmaking that has been rightly praised as lyrical and poetic. The immaculate print and MGM's lustrous full-frame transfer beautifully exhibit the haunting, picturesque images created by the artisans

The monaural Dolby Digital soundtrack similarly honors Walter Schumann's eloquent score. With its expository leitmotifs—a booming, four-note forte symbolizing the predatory preacher, followed by a flurry of excited woodwinds signifying his fleeing prey—that compellingly drive Laughton's fable, Schumann's symphony can be likened to **PETER AND THE WOLF** by Sergei Prokofiev.

The yellow subtitles, in English and French, are easy-to-read and unobtrusive. However, the transcription of the dia-



logue is sometimes bizarre; Miss Cooper's remark that "Women is such fools" is translated as "Kemuniscent fools." Bonus features include a French soundtrack, and a modest but informative booklet.

Laughton considered Davis Grubb's 19XX source novel a "nightmarish sort of Mother Goose story," and his conception is reflected in the bedtime-story structure of the narrative ("Once upon a time . . .") and the picture's dreamlike look, style, and tone. Thus fashioned the film stands as a fairy tale of good and evil, and, like a fairy tale, it is timeless and immortal.

"Lord, save little children," murmurs Miss Cooper during one of her reflective moods. "The wind blows and the rains are cold. Yet, they abide . . . they abide and endure."

As will **THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER**
—Michael Anthony Carlisle

BLUEBEARD

AllDay Entertainment

\$24.95

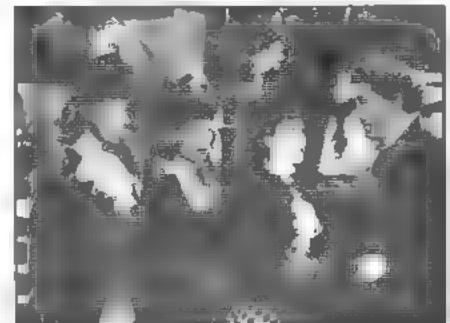
Revered by horror fans for the Expressionistic Karloff/Lugosi showcase **THE BLACK CAT** (1934) and by the Cahiers Du Cinéma crowd for the minimalist *noir* **DET-TOUR** (1946), Poverty Row auteur Edgar G. Ulmer touched on nearly every conceivable genre in his directorial career, from the Western (1934's **THUNDER OVER TEXAS**), to women in prison (1943's **GIRLS IN CHAINS**), to the nude (1958's **NAKED VENUS**). **BLUEBEARD** (1944) ranks among the director's most personal and fully realized works. Originally conceived as a Karloff vehicle in the mid-thirties, Ulmer carried the story over to PRC after he was exiled from the Universal lot for stealing the wife of Carl Laemmle's favorite nephew.

Suffused with an atmosphere both tragic and romantic, **BLUEBEARD** (unrelated to the French folk tale of serial monogamy) relates the story of a 19th-century Parisian painter/puppeteer com-

elled to murder his female subjects. Like Robert Siodmak's **PHANTOM LADY** (1944), **BLUEBEARD** equates modern art with insanity. As the mad artist, John Carradine (fresh from his classic portrayal of Dracula in 1944's **HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN**) delivers an intense, controlled study in obsession and sexual repression. Proof of the freedom availed by the independent studio system, **BLUEBEARD** goes farther than any studio film prior to **PSYCHO** (1960) in its portrayal of the consequences of violence.

With the exception of some grainy night shots and occasional frame damage, the 35mm Cinémathèque Francaise print is clean and detailed. Clear sound flatters the classical score, though the recurrence of a cloying romantic motif during some of the film's darkest passages undermines the suspense. A facsimile press book, still file, and 12-minute documentary with color footage of the puppet "Faust" production (unfortunately the most damaged section of the feature) supplement a handsome presentation of a genuine low-budget classic.

—Michael Draine



HILL BILLYS IN A HAUNTED HOUSE
VCI Home Video

\$19.99

If you don't believe that **HILL BILLYS IN A HAUNTED HOUSE** is the sort of movie to prompt probing questions, then consider this: why is the word "hubbilbies" incorrectly spelled in the title?

If that doesn't intrigue you, then other queries come to mind. If stars Ferlin Husky and Don Bowman play the same characters they played in **LAS VEGAS HILL-BILLYS**, does that really mean people purposefully paid money to see a movie with that title in sufficient numbers to warrant this sequel? And you can bet you'll be asking if director Jean Yarbrough (1941's **THE DEVIL BAT**) ever thought of hiring leads who could actually speak their lines without freezing up like the proverbial deer in the headlights. Most definitely you'll be wondering who Basil Rathbone's agent was at the time.

This 1967 junkyard release is sadly significant in Rathbone's career in so much as it marked the last time he appeared in front of a movie camera. (Imagine the look on his face when this script came sailing over the transom and he read the title on the cover page.) Gaunt, tired-looking, and slurry on some of the dialogue, one can't help but wonder about the actor's health.

If Basil didn't relish the idea of taking billing far below country singer Ferlin Husky, who is neither attractive to look at nor charismatic, then perhaps he was placated by the thought that he wouldn't be the only professional actor humiliated by the proceedings. Playing alongside him, as members of a secret organization of spies, are John Carradine and Lon Chaney, Jr., the latter looking especially paunchy, and old. Their boss is a woman named Madame Wong, played by Linda Ho, Vincent Price's costar in *CONFESSIONS OF AN OPIUM EATER* (1962), and, if you think the country stars can't act, wait until you get a load of Ho!

Of course you'd expect songs and you get a whole slew of them, some dropped in like concrete slabs in the middle of the insipid storyline. One priceless sequence comes when the far-too-blond Joi Lansing finds an elegantly decorated room in the haunted house and segues into a fantasy sequence in which she sings a gooey



ballad, presumably called "Gowns." (Imagine the impatient drive-in yokels back in 1967, blowing the horns of their pickup trucks in rebellion.) And then there's a moment when Sonny James and his backup singers awkwardly show up at the door, sing two numbers (including the catchiest one in the film, "I Thought He Was a Goner But the Cat Came Back") and scoot off after being scared by a fake skeleton on the wall. These guys are so stiff they can't even run convincingly!

If you're still not convinced that this is one jaw-dropping artifact from a bygone era, the movie concludes with a 20-minute Nashville Jamboree, consisting of heavily echoed lip-synched performances by such country icons as Molly Bee, Merle Haggard, and Marcella Wright, whose outfit makes Dale Evans look hip.

The DVD transfer is inconsistent in quality, but that probably has more to do with the original print. Shots don't match up very sharply, with dark night scenes followed by lighter ones, while stock

footage of a scratchy quality is inserted in the final concert scene, showing an audience that seems to have been filmed in 1948. There are chapter stops, though they don't indicate all of the songs, and previews for other VCI DVD releases, which include the Academy Award-winning British classic *ROOM AT THE TOP* (1959), which is certainly the first movie that comes to my mind after watching *HILLBILLYS IN A HAUNTED HOUSE*

—Barry Monush

LOST IN SPACE FOREVER

Image Entertainment

\$19.99

THE FANTASY WORLDS

OF IRWIN ALLEN

Image Entertainment

\$24.99

There are few television shows so distinctively the product of one mind as those of producer Irwin Allen. During the sixties, he created four prime time series that were just the sort of thing undemanding, fun-seeking children wanted to watch. *LOST IN SPACE* was the second of Allen's fantastical creations (following *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA* and preceding *THE TIME TUNNEL* and *LAND OF THE GIANTS*) and it remains the best loved, most hated, most revived, most discussed of the batch.

Coproduced and co-scripted by one of the original cast members, Bill (formerly Billy) Mumy, *LOST IN SPACE FOREVER* offers a very colorful overview of the series' inception, its transition from straightforward sci-fi adventure to a subversively strange level of high camp, and its enduring fame. Hosted by John Larroquette on a mock up of the Jupiter 2's main deck, this 1998 special was made to coincide with the noisy and humorless big screen adaptation of *LOST IN SPACE*. The series is correctly assessed here as one that had great kid appeal because of its focus on a family in outer space, its quirky monsters, the sci-fi gadgetry, and, of course, the comical interplay between pompous, two-faced Dr. Smith (Jonathan Harris) and the sharp-witted Robot.

All of the surviving cast principals (Guy Williams died in 1989) appear in interviews to offer their thoughts and memories. Humorous mention is made of the tailored, groovier uniforms for the third season, the shameless recycling of monster costumes, and the show's vast popularity in such far off places as Australia. You also get footage from the original unaired pilot; the 1990 25th anniversary reunion held in Boston; Bill Mumy's appearance with the Robot on *STUDS*; and a mercifully brief glimpse of the lifeless Saturday afternoon animated incarnation of the show. Well-deserved tributes are given to L.B. Abbott's special effects, which include some far more impressive bits than most people give the show credit for, and Johnny (now John) Williams' terrific music score, which offered not one but two great opening themes.

Among the extras is the original CBS promo for the show ("Wouldn't Dad want

to use this jetpack to avoid freeway traffic?"), Guy Williams' screen test (in which an off-camera Irwin Allen encourages him to smoke!), and silent test footage of various effects shots, a section that runs



far too long for even the most diehard *LOST* fans.

If you can't fulfill your Irwin Allen craving from this DVD then you must, by all means, grab the highly enjoyable documentary *THE FANTASY WORLD OF IRWIN ALLEN*. Originally shown on the Sci-Fi Channel, the whole scope of the Allen career is covered, starting with his days as a radio commentator and his Academy Award-winning documentary *THE SEA AROUND US*. An odd appearance by Allen on *YOUR BET YOUR LIFE* is seen along with clips from his weird all-star history lesson, *THE STORY OF MANKIND* (1957); and coming attractions for *THE BIG CIRCUS* (1959) and *FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON* (1966).

Of course, the bulk of the special concentrates on the four sixties series, with original cast principals showing up from each, including *THE TIME TUNNEL*'s Whit Bissell (who died not long after this was taped) and *LAND OF THE GIANTS*' Deanna Lund, who is not only fabulously well-preserved, but bears a striking resemblance to Michelle Pfeiffer. *VOYAGE*'s David Hedison reminisces with humor about his initial resistance to do the show, having worked previously with Allen on *THE LOST WORLD* (1960); Stefan Arngrim and other *GIANTS* cast members muse over the physical exertion endured while working with the show's enormous props; and James Darren looks back with much affection on his participation in *THE TIME TUNNEL* (which, for my money, boasted one of the most memorable set designs of the decade).

A fair amount of time is spent on Allen's two exciting blockbuster hits of the seventies, *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE* (1972) and *THE TOWERING INFERN* (1974), including footage from behind-the-scenes featurettes showing how much control Allen exerted on his projects. For extra features, you get the sales promo hawking *LAND OF THE GI-*

ANTS; short pilots for two unrealized series, CITY BENEATH THE SEA and THE MAN FROM THE 25TH CENTURY; and a delightfully hokey NATO promo reel that shows Allen arriving at his office on the 20th Century Fox lot in a pink leisure suit (!) to talk about his full slate of upcoming projects, including two that never saw the light of day: THE CIRCUS and THE WALTER SYNDROME.

Cohosted by LOST IN SPACE stars June Lockhart, Bill Mumy, and the Robot (Bob May), this 90 minute plus tribute to the Master of Disaster is chock-full of wonderful clips, all of which are guaranteed to bring back a lot of good memories for those of us for who grew up in Irwin's own special world of wonder.

—Barry Monush

NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE Anchor Bay Entertainment

\$34.98

Debate over Werner Herzog's 1979 remake of F. W. Murnau's early classic has lasted over 20 years. Some fans praised Herzog's scene-for-scene recreation of the original; others found it derivative and boring. The most head-scratchingly odd criticism leveled at the film is that it isn't appropriate viewing if you're high on pot! One thing all film freaks could agree on, though, was that NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE needed a legitimate American video release. Although sometimes televised and available through various import sources, a first-rate, uncut copy was difficult to acquire. Thanks to the fine

folks at Anchor Bay, this need has been met—and the DVD offers cool extra features to boot!

NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE is truly haunting and somber; it makes one believe that being a vampire would really be a terrible tragedy. Klaus Kinski gives an unforgettable performance as the undying Count, an unspeakably sad and weary Dracula rendered virtually inert by the weight of endless, lonely centuries. The film also boasts a fine score by Popul Vuh, excellent use of authentic Dutch locations, and great performances from Bruno Ganz as Jonathan Harker and the lovely Isabelle Adjani as his pensive wife Lucy, the only person brave and pure enough to confront the undead.

Herzog contributes many well-composed sequences that suggest both wonder and horror. Such images as Harker's midnight trek alongside a raging mountain torrent, Lucy's confrontations with the Count, and the seemingly infinite funeral processions, linger in the viewer's mind. When Lucy wades through the streets, a once orderly and refined German city reduced to chaotic madness via Dracula's plague, Herzog achieves one of the great Gothic moments in cinematic history. More than any other vampire film, NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE conveys the sensation of a waking nightmare.

The DVD includes both German and English language versions, a behind-the-scenes featurette, and three trailers. The American trailers betray too many highlights, but the Spanish teaser, a montage

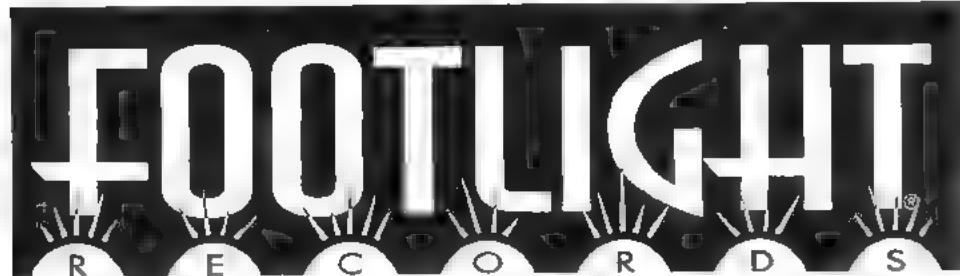
of stills, effectively recreates the film's dreamlike mood. The highlight is probably the audio commentary from Werner Herzog, a funny and informative track.

Once again Anchor Bay earns praise from the horror community. Everything



from the pristine quality of the prints to the extra goodies speaks volumes about the company's commitment to interesting genre offerings. If you don't admire NOSFERATU THE VAMPYRE (straight or high!), this disc may convert you. If you're a member of the vampire's cult already, don't hesitate—add this must-have DVD to your collection today.

—Jonathan Malcolm Lampley



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ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN

ANDY D Review by Mark Clark



"Jeepers!" movie posters proclaimed, "The Creepers are after Bud & Lou!"

Actually, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello were doing the chasing, trying to recapture their flagging box-office appeal. In retrospect, the idea seems obvious: Combine two fading film franchises—the Abbott and Costello comedies and the Universal monsters series—and hope each strengthens the other. Nevertheless, the concept remained a tough sell—especially to Lou Costello. He and Bud Abbott entered production for the movie that was originally (and rather foolishly) named *THE BRAIN OF FRANKENSTEIN* and would become *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* reluctantly. Costello thought the team was making a mistake.

Instead, they were making their legacy.

It's a tribute to the team's brilliance that *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* (1948) is only arguably their best film. Convincing cases can also be made for *BUCK PRIVATES* and *HOLD THAT GHOST* (both 1941), *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES* (1947), and a few other pictures. Yet, *MEET FRANKENSTEIN* remains the team's most popular and probably most-watched movie. It ranks as the finest horror comedy ever made, rivaled only by Mel Brooks' affectionate horror burlesque, *YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN* (1974).

Bud and Lou play Chick Young and Wilbur Gray, two bungling baggage handlers in La Mirada, Florida, who deliver a pair of oversized crates to McDougall's House of Horrors. When the contents of the crates—the "lifeless" bodies of Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi) and the Frankenstein Monster (Glenn Strange)—mysteriously disappear, our heroes are suspected of theft. Hoping to clear their names, they receive some unexpected, and unwanted, assistance from Lawrence Talbot (Lon Chaney Jr.), who hopes to destroy Dracula and the Monster and free the world of their menace. Unfortunately, Talbot's help requires a lot of overtime, and he's forced to moonlight.

Wilbur doesn't realize that Dracula and his henchwoman, Dr. Sandra Mornay (Lenore Aubert) plan to transplant his brain into the skull of the Monster, to make the creature more docile. He also doesn't realize that Joan Raymond (Jane Randolph) is an insurance investigator on the trail of the missing exhibits. Both women cozy up to Wilbur, much to Chick's befuddlement. The film offers little of the team's fabled verbal patter (no "Who's on First?"), but more than compensates with a wealth of sight gags and physical humor. The moving-candle routine, first seen in *HOLD THAT GHOST*, returns from the dead to provide the movie's comic highlight. The picture closes with a no holds barred, knockdown, drag-out brawl between Chick, Wilbur, and the monsters. It's the kind of battle royal the advertising for earlier Universal monster rallies promised, but failed to deliver.

For years, horror purists have carped that *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* demeans Universal's beloved horror characters. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, the film treats the monsters with greater respect than Universal's earlier rallies. All the monsters play important roles in the advancement of the story. The Wolf Man retains his trademark pathos, and the Frankenstein Monster has more to do than in *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944) and *HOUSE OF DRACULA* (1945) put together.

The production enabled Lon Chaney Jr. and Glenn Strange to take a victory lap for their portrayals of the Wolf Man and the Monster. Best of all, it allowed Bela Lugosi, after a 17-year exile, to return to his most famous role as the King of the Vampires. The star responded with one of his greatest performances. Lugosi erased many of the errors that marred his famous but flawed emoting in the original *DRACULA* (1931) and delivered a subtle, menacing performance. This proved essential, because an unintentionally humorous performance (such as the ones Lugosi gave over at Monogram) would have sunk *MEET FRANKENSTEIN*.

PAGE 32: Bud Abbott and Lou Costello's best movie? Possibly. Their most famous? No question about it, *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* (1948) is the one everyone remembers. PAGE 33: "What we need is fresh blood—and brains," says an incognito Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi) to Wilbur Gray (Costello). LEFT: At McDougall's House of Horrors, Dracula frees the Monster (Glenn Strange) from his crate. BELOW: Hot on the trail of Dracula and the Monster is Larry Talbot, The Wolf Man (Lon Chaney Jr.). The picture marked the fifth and final time Chaney portrayed his greatest contribution to horror-dom.

The movie's magic stems from the way its horror and humor play off one another, each strengthening the other. It works because the monsters—or rather, the actors playing them—proceed as if nobody told them this was a comedy, though they are clearly, unquestionably in on the joke.

Lenore Aubert provides another of the film's memorable portrayals as the femme fatale, Sandra. Frank Ferguson bellows and blusters amusingly as McDougall. And the film's final moments feature a surprise "appearance" by Vincent Price!

No one, however, is more impressive in *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* than Abbott and Costello themselves. Costello contributes a card catalog full of hilarious scare takes and pratfalls. Abbott gets his share of laughs as well, as Chick vents his ever-increasing exasperation with Wilbur's inexplicable, sudden appeal to women. (He doesn't realize that both women are trying to dupe his pal.) Audiences would never know the team approached this project without conviction, a tribute to Bud and Lou's professionalism.

Priced at \$29.95, Universal's DVD release is transferred from a good but not outstanding grain print. Mild speck-



ling and minor scratches remain noticeable, but don't mar the film to the point of distraction. This transfer represents a dramatic improvement over the VHS version. The disc's sound quality is superb, which makes it much easier to enjoy Frank Skinner's delightful score.

Bearing the hefty title *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE MONSTERS: THE MAKING OF ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*, the DVD's original documentary—written and hosted by film scholar David J. Skal—provides a veritable feast of behind-the-scenes information. Skal attempts to balance the emphasis between Bud and Lou and the monsters, but winds up focusing more on Lugosi, Chaney, and Strange than the film's nonhorror stars—not that many of those who purchase the disc will mind. Skal also tries to strike an appropriate note of levity with the documentary. Unfortunately, the humor—including a music video cobbled together from the film—seems forced and doesn't play particularly well.

Gregory William Mank—who ranks among the most dedicated film historians—provides the feature's running commentary, which proves as informative and splendidly written as any of Mank's many superb books. Tossed in for good measure are production notes, bios, a gallery of photographs, posters and lobby cards, and the original theatrical trailer.

It's worth noting that *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* was not released as part of the Monsters Classics series, but rather as the first installment of a new series: "Universal Studios Comedy Legends." Fans can only guess what future installments of the series will include. Hopefully, more Bud and Lou. (HOLD

THAT GHOST and THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES would be nice, for starters.) Then what? Perhaps W.C. Fields—although *THE BANK DICK* (1940) is already scheduled for release by Criterion. Brace yourself for the possibility of Ma and Pa Kettle and Francis, the Talking Mule. It's probably too much to hope for Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson's long-overlooked quartet of Universal releases: *HELLzapoppin'* (1941), *CRAZY HOUSE* (1943), *GHOST CATCHERS* (1944), and *SEE MY LAWYER* (1945).

But who knows? Maybe Universal will leave us laughing after all.



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Holmes, Headroom,

and a Hound from Hell!

by Charles Prepolec

Jhe footprints of a gigantic Hound will once again be crossing the television screens of North American viewers this fall. As we approach the 100th Anniversary of the first publication of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), the timing couldn't be better.

On July 12, 2000, Muse Entertainment Enterprises in association with Hallmark Entertainment and the Odyssey Channel, announced their intention to produce for TV a new \$4.5 million version of the classic Sherlock Holmes tale *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Muse Entertainment Enterprises Inc. is a Montreal based television and film production/distribution company established in June 1998. By the end of 1999, Muse and its affiliates had coproduced or provided production services for 29 different projects, including 23 TV movies and miniseries, four feature films, and two TV series. THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES is to be broadcast this fall on CTV in Canada and the Odyssey Network in the USA. International distribution will be handled by Hallmark. Currently in production as a followup is THE SIGN OF FOUR, with the likelihood of two more television films down the line.

This new production of Conan Doyle's classic tale of the spectral hound features 42-year-old Matt Frewer in the role of Sherlock

Holmes. Frewer is, of course, best known for his Max Headroom character in both a TV program and long-running cola commercials, but has also appeared in a number of feature films, including HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS (1986) and LAWNMOWER MAN 2 (1996). His distinctive voice has been featured in many animated programs, including THE PINK PANTHER, HERCULES, and GAR-GOYLES. Born in Washington, D.C., Frewer lived in Victoria, British Columbia until the age of 15 and then relocated to northern Ontario. He spent 11 years in England studying at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and





Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, Matt Frewer and Kenneth Welsh, are put on the case of *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* by Dr. Mortimer and venture into a rather rustic-looking Baker Street for clues.

the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain before moving on to various classical and contemporary works on stage in London. Six feet three inches tall and with strong, angular features, he appears to be well suited to the role of Holmes. Originally up for the part of Stapleton, it was quickly decided that he was well suited to the part of the Great Detective. His kinetic style will certainly add energy and spontaneity to the character.

Commenting on the role, Frewer explains, "It is really fun and challenging to play Holmes. The challenge is to keep a bubble of fun going otherwise Holmes would be some a different sort of character. Holmes has a rumpled charm, a Professor Higgins quality. It delights him that he is so clever and so far ahead of everyone. He has been played by so many actors in the past that the audience has certain expectations. After I've met these expectations, I can fill in the rest of the character."

In the pivotal role of Dr. John H. Watson is Edmonton, Alberta-born actor Kenneth Welsh. A staple of Canadian theater and television, his training includes time with the National Theatre School of Canada as well as seven years at Stratford. His portrayal of politician and killer *Colin Thatcher* in *LOVE AND HATE*, won him the 1990 Gemini Award (the Canadian equivalent of the USA Emmy Awards) for Best Actor in a dramatic miniseries. Welsh has received a total of six Gemini Awards, including the Earl Grey Award for Lifetime Achievement. He has received an honorary doctorate from the University of Alberta and is the recipient of the Gascon-Thomas Award from the National Theatre School of Canada. Among his more than 30 films are *CROCODILE DUNDEE II* (1988), *THE HOUSE ON CARROLL STREET* (1988), *THE FRESHMAN* (1990), and *LEGENDS OF THE FALL* (1994). American television viewers will most likely recall Welsh as the sinister Windom Earle in David Lynch's quirky series *TWIN PEAKS*.

Welsh's Watson will be a staunch and active partner to Holmes, with no sign of Nigel Brucean buffoonery to be found. He views Watson as an admirable and capable Afghan war veteran who can hold his own in any situation.

"You know that Watson is sometimes played as a man who is, how shall I say, short of breath and overweight. This is not he. Watson is described as a man in his mid-fifties, very fit, having spent all those years in Afghanistan. He's been known as a ladies man, in fact, quite attractive to women and so on. Likes to have younger women around him."

This Watson manages to banter and exchange quips with Holmes without missing a beat. Of the relationship between Holmes and Watson, Welsh says: "Watson and Holmes complement each other. Watson looks with his eyes while Holmes looks with his mind. They bicker a lot because they are so extreme. And we played them—well, as might be said, as a couple of old queens sometimes. That will be a different twist for them, too. I mean they've been living together for years. They are kind of bitchy to each other. Like a couple of old guys who live together, they have their own way."

As for working with Matt Frewer as Holmes, Welsh laughs, "Well, he's quite mad, actually. Matt is quite insane and it's a very good combination. He has a kind of comic madness about him as Holmes, which I think is a little different from some of the more stuffy versions of the role. We both try to play the comedy of it a little bit. My approach is slightly different from his, because Watson is a little more conservative, but he plays a wild and crazy Holmes."

Appearing as the youthful Sir Henry Baskerville and adding a touch of glamour, is 28-year-old Jason London. Among his credits is the title role in the recent television miniseries *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS*, as well as film roles in *TO WONG FOO, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING,*

JULIE NEWMAR (1995) and THE RAGE: CARRIE 2 (1999). London's Sir Henry is a plain-speaking American determined to overcome the ghastly goings on at his newly inherited ancestral pile.

Filmed entirely in and around Montreal, with the inclusion of inserts shot in the UK, this production had distinct challenges to meet. Foremost among them was turning the charming streets of Old Montreal and the surrounding areas into the familiar locations of 19th-century England within a 22-day shooting schedule. Production designer Jean-Baptiste Tard, working with a budget of \$600,000, had to not only create the Baker Street set, but also a frontage for Baskerville Hall. The facade for Baskerville Hall is apparently an exact reproduction of the facade of a 400-year-old English manor house. The stone structure is 60 feet long and 32 feet high, and took four weeks to complete.

Another challenge was to create a convincingly real moor setting. This included a 500-foot stone wall that required the creation and placement of some 3000 "rocks" on location in Harrington, Quebec, located on the foothills of the Laurentian Mountains. Each "rock" was made from Styrofoam, then coated with a layer of concrete, bits of fungus, and moss, and individually hand-painted. The bog, where the hound meets its fate, was created on location in Laval, Quebec.

Regarding the production design, Tard states, "What I try to achieve in my work is an abundance and richness of detail. For Holmes' residence, we searched for the exotic and funky because he was an eccentric Victorian."

In a move to differentiate this production from previous films, the focus will be heavily on the supernatural. Holding the directorial reins is English-born Rodney Gibbons. Among Gibbons' director of photography credits are the genre films SCREAMERS (1979) and SCANNERS II (1991).

Kenneth Welsh comments on Gibbons' style as a director: "I have a great respect for the way he seems to be shooting, which I think is probably very, very detailed and well-chosen shots. He has a very careful idea of the way he wants us to look, as he himself was a director of photography before he was a director. He has a very decisive approach to his directing, but he has a great regard for the actors' knowledge of their roles, too. He'll sometimes shoot a shot from several different angles and find that he's run out of time, but it's really well worth it overall, because you'll see the result. It's going to be a very beautiful picture, besides being a well-told story."

Gibbons clearly wants to maintain suspense and give this HOUND a lot of bite. Explaining his approach, he says, "This is the scariest HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES ever

made! None of the many previous versions has been very scary. We set out to exploit the thriller and supernatural aspects of this classic tale. In the original tale, Holmes, a man of reason, dismisses the Hound early on and says that it is the work of a human agent and not the work of the devil—but Holmes' rational thinking holds readers back from believing in the Hound. It prevents them from being swept up by the thrilling, supernatural possibilities. Viewers will believe that, perhaps, the Hound is from Hell, and we will take them on a spine-tingling, enthralling ride."

Humor and horror are certainly the distinguishing features of the streamlined script provided by Emmy-nominated writer Joe Wiesenfeld. While the humor, derived mostly from Holmes' eccentric behavior, such as the wearing of curly-toed Persian slippers, is increased, it is unobtrusive and doesn't detract from the plot or characterization. In the main, the script is faithful to the tone of Conan Doyle's novella, although at times the dialogue is just a touch too modern. Sir Henry's dialogue suffers the most, as the writer has undertaken to make him appear very non-English.

Certain familiar sequences have been drastically altered or deleted altogether. Among the most notable fatalities are Mortimer's dog and the delightful scene with cabby John Clayton. Mortimer's dog was seen as a needless encumbrance, and one dog on the set was viewed as quite enough. Still, the change does detract from the opening "cane deductions" sequence. The removal of the cabby sequence is surprising in a production that emphasizes humor. Clearly the reasoning was to move the action to the Baskerville estate as quickly as possible, perhaps for budgetary considerations. All other characters are present, including the often overlooked Laura Lyons.

Another change to the script comes in the noncanonical saddling of Holmes with the deerstalker in a stroll down Baker Street. As Holmes spends so little time onscreen, it is clear that the production needed to confirm Frewer as Holmes in the eyes of the general public. Hence the fixing of Frewer in the stereotype accoutrements. A line is inserted into the script in an effort to explain this. When reaching for a hat, Holmes suggests that as he is on a hunt, a hunter's cap is appropriate—a bit thin, but a wink to the audience indicating that the writer and director realized the garb was not suitable, but had to be there.

The biggest change comes with the timing of Holmes' reappearance. Instead of revealing his presence to Watson at the stone hut, he doesn't turn up until the climax of the action. Gibbons explained this as another effort to maintain

Continued on page 41

LEFT and RIGHT: Emma Campbell is Beryl Stapleton and Jason London is Sir Henry Baskerville, star-crossed lovers living under the threat of a spectral Hound of Hell. CENTER: Sir Henry, Dr. Mortimer, and Watson arrive at Baskerville Hall, scene of the recent death of Sir Charles Baskerville.





Putting on the Dog

Rodney Gibbons

interviewed by Charles Prepolec

Born in England, Rodney Gibbons moved to Montreal in 1968 to study chemistry. Looking for employment, he took a job at a film laboratory.

"Chemistry was chemistry," Gibbons says. Soon he was taking film courses at Concordia University and making student films.

"I took a crooked path to filmmaking," he says, laughing. He worked as assistant cameraman for the National Film Board of Canada and was soon a director of photography.

"I also kept writing screenplays because I always loved to write," he adds.

Gibbons was the scriptwriter of the feature *DIGGERS* (1993) and TV's *LASSIE* (1997-98). He was the director of photography for *SCANNERS II* (1991) and *SCREAMERS* (1995). Gibbons directed *OWD BOB* (1997), *LITTLE MEN* (1997), and *THE PACT* (1999). Having put *Lassie* through her paces, Gibbons was ready to tackle a dog of a different color: *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*

Scarlet Street: How did you become involved with this new version of THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES?

Rodney Gibbons: How did I become involved? A call from my agent! She said, "Lister, Muse Entertainment and Hallmark are making *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and they want to interview you." I said, "Sure! Let's go!" I went down, got interviewed, got the job! As simple as that!

SS: Whose idea was it to produce this new version of the story?

RG: Really, I can't say specifically, but I think the original idea came from the Hallmark people or possibly the *Odyssey* people. I would imagine that the executive producer, Steve Hewitt, had a lot to do with it.

SS: Had you read any of the Holmes stories prior to your involvement?

RG: Well, I read them, but I read them about 30 years ago back in England. I can't say I remembered a great deal about them. I've certainly seen a lot of *Sherlock*

Holmes films over the years, but I'm not nor was I ever an avid reader of *Sherlock Holmes* stories.

SS: Did the Holmes films you've seen affect your approach to this production?

RG: They did in a couple of ways, because you don't want to repeat, you don't want to copy what someone else has done—although sometimes you'll see some good ideas in them, which feeds your own creativity. You find ways to use the idea, but with your own interpretation. I looked at about three or four different versions of *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, just to see what they'd done with it, and took off from there. Of course, they're all different, because they're from different periods and they're different styles. I wanted to make something original. I think we did!

SS: What will set your version of THE HOUND apart from other adaptations?

RG: Well, first and foremost, the dynamics between Watson and *Sherlock* is a lot different than anything I'd seen before.



PAGE 39: Rodney Gibbons sets up a shot for *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, while Sherlock Holmes (Matt Frewer, that is) waits patiently. LEFT: Gibbons stages a scene at Baskerville Hall with Barrymore (Arthur Holden) and Mrs. Barrymore (Leni Parker), two servants with a secret. RIGHT: The Hound of Hell attacks!

We really played up the comedic aspect, for example—not that it's a comedy, of course, but Holmes being the quirky, eccentric type that he is, he often comes across as quite funny and humorous. We tried to exploit that. Also, in the book and in most of the other versions, Holmes, being the very rational man that he is, almost immediately discounts any possibility of there being a supernatural connection to the Hound. And that is evident then throughout the rest of the story. What we tried to do—although Holmes is still as rational as ever—we tried to keep a certain ambiguity as to whether there is a supernatural Hound or not. We also restructured the story a bit, although all of the other versions did this. In the book, Holmes sheds his disguise in front of Watson and basically explains his observations and deductions and explains who's responsible, pretty much at the beginning of the third act. From that point on, it's just a setup of drawing the villa into their net. Well, we saw that, dramatically, this wasn't as satisfactory as having Holmes only reveal himself at the end, so we delayed his shedding of the disguise until towards the end of the third act.

SS: It's surprising that you've reduced Holmes' screen time, since usually an attempt is made to do exactly the opposite.

RG: We wanted to do something different, keep the drama alive a little longer, or at least keep the notion of the Hound and who was responsible alive longer. We didn't want to give it away quite as early as in the book.

SS: What was the biggest challenge in bringing this production to the screen?

RG: Oh, well, there was lots of those! Well, the biggest challenge was doing it all in 22 days, and finding locations that could serve for Dartmoor here in Québec! There are not many and so we had to do a little trickery. We went to England and did quite a bit of shooting on Dartmoor

itself, getting various shots of the moorland to use as transitions, to use as the credit sequence and also to use as plate shots encompassing CGI shots. On a couple of occasions, for example, we blended Dartmoor backgrounds with Québec foregrounds to give it that sense of rolling moorland. In Québec, you don't have that kind of rolling, barren moorland that is Dartmoor, so we found a place where there's a nice little group of hills and valleys. We used that and we CGI'd the moorland in when needed. The other great challenge—well, anytime you're working with animals is a challenge, so the dog was a big challenge too!

SS: Were there any particular difficulties with the dog?

RG: The problem was the time frame. From the beginning of prep until we started shooting was just over five weeks, so we only had that time to find a dog. We found a couple that might have fit the job, but they would have had to be trained from scratch. Of course, that was a daunting proposition, so we decided we'd be better off going with an already trained dog. That's why we went with Eno, who is a good technical actor; he can hit his marks and growl on cue and run on cue and snap or bark and do whatever he has to do on cue. He was pretty good!

SS: And that's why you've got a black German Shepherd instead of a hound.

RG: We tried various types of hounds, but we couldn't find one trained enough and, as with a lot of hounds, their muzzles cover their teeth. When they growl, you don't see much of a fierce growl. With Eno, once he pulled his muzzle back into a growl, his teeth were very prominent. He looked quite fierce.

SS: What sort of special effects were used to give the Hound his hellish appearance?

RG: Well, it's only in the flashback, when Dr. Mortimer is explaining the appearance of the dog and says, "With eyes

aglow like the fires of Hell..." He'll have blazing red eyes. We used red contacts, but we'll add to that with CGI and give a nice, demonic glow to the Hound and a little bit of dragon breath and so on and so forth.

SS: He looks quite fierce in the *HOUND* publicity photos.

RG: Actually, he was a very friendly dog—but he's an actor! (Laughs)

SS: Speaking of actors, did you enjoy working with Matt Frewer, Kenneth Welsh, and Jason London?

RG: Matt's a character and a half! He was perfect as Holmes. He looks the part, and he's just such an incredible actor. He's just so funny and he's very physical. Matt and Ken were fantastic together, and they loved working together, so it was very easy for me.

SS: How straight does Frewer play Holmes?

RG: When he's serious, he's deadly serious, but he's a major eccentric so he has these little quirks and pet adorables, things that he does. They really played up the close relationship between Watson and Holmes and the light competition between them, because Watson is constantly trying to prove to Holmes that he can apply his methods. But, of course, Watson's always wrong! (Laughs)

SS: Watson certainly gets the opportunity in *THE HOUND*, since he pretty much carries the film.

RG: He carries the film from the end of the first act to almost the end of the third act. The second act and the beginning of the third acts are all Watson!

SS: Exactly. For a mystery, *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* hasn't very many suspects. Have you introduced any red herrings or tried to cast suspicion on any other characters besides the killer?

RG: No. That was one of the problems, too, since there are no other suspects.

Continued on page 76

HOLMES, HEADROOM, AND A HOUND FROM HELL

Continued from page 38

suspense longer than in previous versions. He rightly points out that much of the plot is revealed at the hut sequence, leaving the climax as merely a followup to Holmes' revelations. The downside is that this Holmes has less to do than ever before.

But what of the Hound itself, you ask? Well, it seems that a large black German Shepherd by the name of Eno has received that choice part. In an effort to avoid the usual problems associated with making an amiable hound-like dog look vicious, it was decided to use handler Raymond Ducasse's well-trained Shepherd instead. Kenneth Welsh recounts one incident, though, where Eno was just a touch too enthusiastic:

"I think there was one thing that was very, very funny. There was a scene in which Watson is watching. He sees in the distance what he thinks is Sir Henry, but it's the man wearing the borrowed clothes. The dog attacks him and the stuntman falls back over the cliff and lands on the mattress out of frame. The dog attacked him all right. It looked terrific in profile from a distance, you know, against the fading sun. So the stuntman fell out of frame, and the dog all of a sudden jumped after him. It looked like the dog was committing suicide! Instead of stopping, growling, and snarling whatever he's supposed to do—he jumped right after him! Very funny! I always sympathize with animals on the set, because there is so much going on around them."

In a recent interview, Rodney Gibbons explained that the problem with a typical hound is that, even when aggressively growling, the jowls of many hounds do not pull back far enough to reveal the dog's teeth, which is certainly not the case with the muzzle of a German Shepherd. Through the use of contacts and CGI effects, Eno is transformed into a rather nasty piece of work. We shall see just what it is that this dog gets up to in the nighttime....

In the shadow of the Granada series, this new Holmes series will obviously be subject to direct comparisons. While



Sir Henry and Dr. Watson are greeted by Barrymore (Arthur Holden), the faithful—if somewhat questionable—Baskerville butler. Did the butler do it? Only time and Sherlock Holmes will tell.

likely not the most canonical version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, there is a great deal of enthusiasm and first-rate workmanship evident in the project. Frewer is a talented and capable actor, whose Holmes, whether canonical or not, will no doubt make a strong impression. With over 150 actors previously in the role, there is certainly room for yet another interpretation. Clearly the producers feel strongly enough about the success of the television film that more are already on the way.

The Odyssey Channel airs *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* on Saturday, October 21 (8-10pm, ET/PT), encoring Sunday, October 22 (4-6pm, ET/PT), Thursday, October 26 (9-11pm, ET/PT), and Sunday, October 29 (9-11pm, ET/PT).

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Holmes to the Max **Matt Frewer**

INTERVIEWED BY CHARLES HEDGES

Matt Frewer was born in Washington, DC, and raised in Victoria, BC, Canada. In 1984, he auditioned for the role of Max Headroom, then a veejay for a British music show. After two seasons, Max Headroom was discovered by USA programmers and turned into a short-lived sci-fi series. Matt went on to play the leads in the series DOCTOR DOCTOR and SHAKY GROUND, as well as make several feature appearances, including HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS (1986). He has also found a niche as a voice actor, most recently in Disney's HERCULES (1997) as Panic, as well as on television in THE PINK PANTHER, ALADDIN, and GARGOYLES. Already identified with one cult character, Frewer has few qualms about taking on the role of the world's greatest detective, Mr. Sherlock Holmes

Scarlet Street: Tell us about being cast as Sherlock Holmes in *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*.

Matt Frewer: They actually got in touch with me—Muse Entertainment and a producer that I worked with before way back when on *MAX HEADROOM*, a fellow called Steve Hewitt. He was working with HBO and actually approved my casting as Max Headroom. He was the executive producer on *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*. They got in touch with me about playing the villain, actually, in *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES* and I met with Steve and the director, Rodney Gibbons. They walked away kind of going, "Hum, maybe he'd make a good Holmes." At that point, they were in easy negotiations with a very well-known English actor, and it just worked out in my favor. So I'm very pleased with it! (Laughs) It's obviously a wonderful role, and a great one to roll off into a franchise, which it looks like we're doing.

SS: Had you read any of the Holmes stories prior to your involvement with this new project?

MF: I read a few of them when I was a kid and had obviously seen a lot of the movies, in particular the Basil Rathbone ones and the Jeremy Brett ones for BBC. I was familiar with it as a fan. *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, that's the one that everybody seems to know—I'd certainly read that one.

SS: Did seeing any of the previous versions effect how you chose to portray Sherlock Holmes?

MF: No, I don't think so, because Rodney was eager to make this the scariest HOUND ever and wanted a more modern take on it. I knew that, portraying this particular character, there are certain expectations that need to be met, that the audience needs fulfilled. Everybody has this set notion of who Sherlock is and what he is; I mean, he's the world's greatest detective and so obviously you have to fulfill certain markers. Once that's done, then the canvas is pretty wide open to bring your own stuff to it and, hopefully, that's what I did.

SS: What was your main focus for the character of Holmes?

MF: The main focus is the fact that the guy is brilliant and has these brain storms, and that he gets so excited with a notion that he almost gets ahead of himself. It's almost like a mild epileptic fit, they're literally brain storms. Once he's exorcized that, he's able to take a step back and view it from a bird's eye view in a very calm way. I use kind of big-gear changes makes for his eccentricity. That's one of the fun things to play, these abrupt gear changes.

SS: Is there any intention to delve into Holmes' darker side, such as his drug use?

MF: I hope so. In *THE HOUND*, it was touched on in an early draft and then somewhat ironed out, because that's going to be a family version on a family-oriented network. But as we go on with this franchise, I'm rather hoping that

there's going to be more illusions to that and to why Holmes is isolated by his genius, you know and the eccentricity and slightly warped quality that goes along with that isolation.

SS: So how much of Matt Frewer is there in Sherlock Holmes?

MF: Good segue! (Laughs) Because you being the crack-smoking guy we know Matt! I would say there's a fair amount I'm never sure what the exact percentage is when you get the final product. I consider myself a movie and television actor as opposed to a movie or television star, and so I like to think I'm not hired time and time again to play myself. When the final cut comes in and I have a look at it, I think, "Yeah, that's some of me and oh,

of a shock for unwary viewers. Matt Frewer! What's he doing there?"

MF: What the hell is he doing there? You should have gotten in touch with the Canadian Consulate and said, "Send him back!" (Laughs)

SS: Was there any resistance to your being cast as Holmes, since you're not English?

MF: By whom?

SS: Anyone along the way.

MF: There will certainly be Holmes aficionados who will say it's a bastardization, but that's part of the territory. I think it's a pretty good fit, character wise, and given where I trained and spent a lot of my early acting years, I consider myself a couple of steps ahead of the game. That is, a couple of steps ahead of other North American actors who would be considered for this role. So the answer is, "I'm not qualified in that I wasn't born in England, but I am qualified to portray him" (Laughs)

SS: You've got the physical look for Holmes, certainly.

MF: I think so!

SS: Rodney Gibbons, the director, did say that your English accent is flawless!

MF: Oh, that was very nice coming from an English fellow! I appreciate that!

SS: Other actors have considered the role of Sherlock Holmes as something of a curse. Basil Rathbone certainly did, and Jeremy Brett did to some degree. Do you foresee that there may be some issues for you, such as the darkness of the character or even typecasting?

MF: That's a good question! All I know is that it's a wonderful character and there are so many great stories that Arthur Conan Doyle wrote that it seems like such a natural franchise. When you get an opportunity to play a great character in great stories—there are so few of those around—you gotta jump at it. I didn't have any hesitation about this. Part of the attraction for me, too, particularly after hanging out for a couple of days with the production, was Rodney who's created a great collaborative working atmosphere. Also, there's working with Ken Welsh as Watson, who I knew of but had never met before. It's always a crap shoot, you know; you never know whether you're gonna have any kind of chemistry with the guy, but we just got along like a house on fire right from the word go. That was such a pleasant surprise that there just didn't seem to be any downside.

SS: Both you and Kenneth Welsh appeared in *KISSINGER AND NIXON*, but you never met on that project.

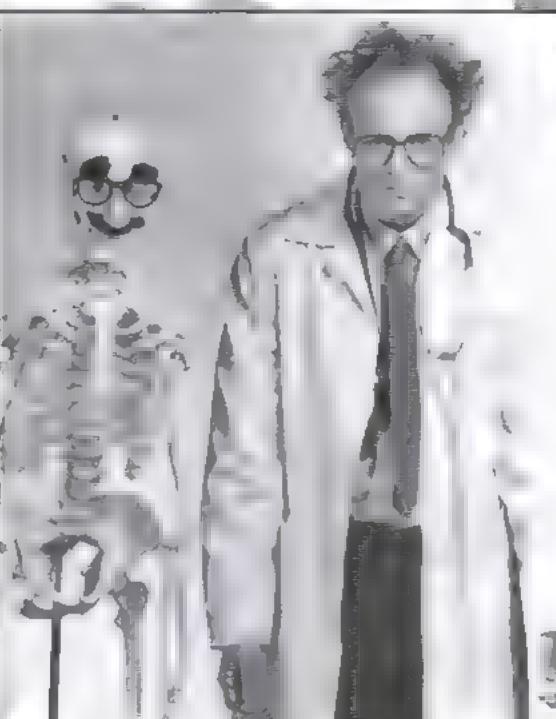
MF: We weren't working the same days. I didn't even know he was in that!

SS: He played the New York Times reporter, Scotty Reston.

MF: Oh, you're absolutely right! Right! No, we never had any scenes together. I was playing Alexander Haig in that, and I remember there was a couple of references to Scotty Reston. Isn't that weird? (Laughs)

SS: Small world!

MF: Isn't that funny!



Matt Frewer and Friend in DOCTOR DOCTOR

that's a side I haven't seen before." There's hopefully a good mix of things. I would say I brought a certain amount of humor to Holmes, but again it comes out of these weird gear changes.

SS: Though you aren't English yourself, you did study in Britain.

MF: Well, I went to high school in Ontario. I didn't want to study as a professional actor at that point in Canada, because at that point it was really just The National Theatre School. I didn't want to go south of the border and be attached to either a University drama program or do a method training. I just thought, "I'll go to England!" and I attended the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain while I was going to the Bristol and Vic Theatre School. I actually did a couple of years with The National Youth Theatre, and then one more year when I started my first year at Bristol and Vic. I had three years there and spent 11 years all told. Doing all the reps in the West End, BBC stuff, movies—it was great training!

SS: Among other things, you were in a *ROBIN OF SHERWOOD* episode years ago. It's kind



LEFT: Matt Frewer proves to be a snappy dresser as Job in *LAWNMOWER MAN 2* (1996). RIGHT: Frewer also plays dress-up in *THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES*, but the program has him sporting Sherlock Holmes' country clothes in Baker Street! Kenneth Welsh is Watson, and Gordon Masten plays Dr Mortimer



SS: Kenneth Welsh described the relationship between Holmes and Watson as like a couple of old queens who have lived together for ages

MF: We were joking about that, because there's that kind of affectionate bickering going on. We would do a scene, we'd look at each other and say, "Oh, my God! Do you think we went too far?" Hopefully people will come away from this with the idea that, not only do these guys work well together, but they have a real affection for each other. It's going to be interesting in the next one *THE SIGN OF THE FOUR*, because Watson falls for Mary Morstan, the girl who comes to visit us with the mystery to solve, and I wonder how Sherlock would feel about that whether there would be a certain jealousy. I'm not saying there's a homoerotic thing going on—but I think it's these two guys who like each other, they're old friends. There's a kind of shorthand with each other that you don't find with new acquaintances.

SS: Sort of an Oscar and Felix thing. You mentioned Watson and his romance. Apparently, he won't marry in the series, but there's a line with Holmes saying, "You deserved me for a wife." There's a sort of wishfulness to it.

MF: You gotta wonder what that line's about! There is a certain kind of emotional jealousy there; he feels, "I'm the apex of the triangle and I'm all alone!"

SS: It's surprising how little screen time Holmes has in this new *HOUND*. There's even less than usual.

MF: I know, it's very interesting. He's in at the beginning and then says, "Watson, you go off and monitor the situation. I have some stuff to do here." London, and then comes in at the end. We had this line in the script where Holmes says, "He left, sort of like us." We were doing a lot with the way Holmes breaks. In a sense, I was examining everything that happened, and I was saying, "Hello, sorry 'm great!" (Laughs) Obviously he

reason that he knew everything was because he was there on the moors the whole time, monitoring the situation and keeping an eye on Watson as he was screwing up! There's this kind of "pal on the head mentor feel" about the Holmes-Watson relationship, as well as all the other stuff that's going on.

SS: One of your more interesting personae has been as a dog in *THE HOUND* and of course *THE DOG*. MF: The dog was phenomenal, and it's about scary too! He was a bit black, park-avoid German shepherd with one ear chewed off. There was one pretty funny night, because he wore red contact lenses and he lost one. At the crew was down on hands and knees looking for the dog's contact! (Laughs) That's in my trailer, call me when you found it!

MF: Yeah, but it was fun to do, really fun, and we all had a great time. Long may that continue!

SS: How does filming in Canada compare to the States?

MF: The crews are just as good if not better than they are in the States. There's a feel of—you know, I don't know whether it's naivete or just good old guileless enthusiasm, but I prefer it—it of everybody mucking in as opposed to saying, "I'll get to moving that light when I finish this dognut!" (Laughs) That's the thing in the States—everything is so unionized that you can't do anything for fear of crossing an invisible picket line.

SS: You've been in relatively few period pieces. Do you find it more challenging or rewarding to play in a historical setting? Is it easier to get into character because you've got this to go against?

MF: I treat preparing an historical character exactly like I would any other preparation. Every time it's different in when you're playing somebody who is not from this, because then you have a certain responsibility to getting that as-

pect of it right. But no, I don't treat it any differently, although obviously what you have to let percolate through is the kind of morale and mores of the time. With *THE HOUND*, Holmes is a Victorian gentleman and, at the time, he'd have been a recognizable star on the street. Given that Victorian gentlemen try to preen like peacocks and "show a tail" that obviously affects how you move and how you present yourself. They were always on show, so that aspect is always brought into the performance. But in terms of preparing who the character is, it seems to be fairly consistent with me all the way through, the way I approach something.

SS: Much of your work involves sci-fi themes. *MAX HEADROOM*, *SCI FACTOR*, *THE STAND*—and now this, of course is a mystery with fantastic elements. Do you ever long to play just normal, everyday guys in normal, everyday situations?

MF: Well, you know what's normal? If you get too normal, then you don't have drama anymore, you don't have any conflict—I mean, sci-fi is obviously the extreme end in that people are put into extreme situations and exhibit fairly broad emotions. When you're happy, you're very happy, when you're scared, you're really scared, because "Watch out for that alien!" I find it more interesting to play what's wrong with a character than what's right. What makes 'em human are those flaws.

SS: What was your first professional job?

MF: My first professional job was at the Theatre Royal York in England—in the play *BEN*. I can even remember the character's name, it was "Wo." I had a two-page scene of dialogue. I walked across stage nude, I kissed a guy and I got my throat cut!

SS: Nice start!

MF: And my mom came to see that too! (Laughs) My brother was with her, and



LEFT: At last, a role with some dignity attached to it. *THE DAY MY PARENTS RAN AWAY* starred Frewer as Bob Miller, a parent who (surprise!) runs away to Camp Second Chance. RIGHT: One of several incarnations of the character, *MAX HEADROOM* starred Frewer in the dual roles of Max and Edison Carter. Amanda Pays costarred



SS: One room for all. (Laughs) MF: I've changed a few little things as we went, but for the most part I really thought it was a wonderful condition of the story. I thought it was greater, was really happy with the script, so there was a lot.

SS: Got it! Do you think *DOCTOR DOCTOR* will have a better chance if CBS made it keep its original sound?

MF: Oh yeah! It was on three different nights and eventually it was on Sunday morning, and some of it was on Sunday night. That's a lot of praise! (Laughs)

SS: Did you ever find that the makeup overshadowed your own contributions?

MF: No, but it cuts both ways. After *MAX* finished, the kind of anonymity of the character meant that I wasn't typecast. By the same token, I was saying, "That was me under there, by the way, I had to live in a la that stuff!" so it cuts both ways. The long and the short of it is, I was grateful to that bite of the cherry because I arrived in L.A. with having played a dual lead in a high-profile series. I didn't have to do any payment pounding from that point of view, it was amazing!

SS: What's the last role you've done?

MF: There was a lot of talk, but it's settled up in legal roadblocks that it's very unlikely it's going to happen. I think the time that gets unknotted it's gonna be past its sell-by date! (Laughs)

SS: You have a reputation for adding to your own film scripts, right?

MF: No, they're good, if they're good, then I'm the first one to stick with the script book line and sinker! If they're a little sketchy, my mind tends to wander and I'll chuck more of my own stuff in to tend to do more with comedy, because it becomes the democratic process where hopefully it's going to be best job wins and it doesn't matter who had the actual idea. With drama, it's more difficult—but no, if the script is great I don't want to touch it!

Continued on page 76



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SS: You've been in relatively few period pieces. Do you find it more challenging or rewarding to play in a historical setting? Is it easier to get into character because you've got this rather distinct costume?

MF: I treat preparing an historical character exactly like I would any other preparation. The only time it's different is when you're playing somebody who is not serious, because then you have a certain responsibility to getting that as-

pect of it right. But no, I don't treat it any differently, although obviously what you have to let percolate through is the kind of morals and mores of the time. With this particular show, Holmes is a Victorian gentleman and, at the time, he'd have been a recognizable star on the street. Given that Victorian gentlemen tend to preen like peacocks and "show a leg," that obviously affects how you move and how you present yourself. They were always on show so that aspect is always brought into the performance, but in terms of preparing who the character is, it seems to be fairly consistent with me all the way through, the way I approach something.

SS: Much of your work involves sci-fi themes—*MAX HEADROOM*, *SCI FACTOR*, *THE STAND*—and now this, of course, is a mystery with fantastic elements. Do you ever long to play just normal, everyday guys in normal, everyday situations?

MF: Well, you know, what's normal? If you get too normal, then you don't have drama anymore, you don't have any conflict—I mean, sci-fi is obviously the extreme end in that people are put into extreme situations and exhibit fairly broad emotions. When you're happy, you're very happy, when you're scared, you're really scared, because "Watch out for that alien!" I find it more interesting to play what's wrong with a character than what's right. What makes 'em human are those flaws.

SS: What was your first professional job?

MF: My first professional job was at the Theatre Royal York in England, in the play *BENT*. I can even remember the character's name; it was Wolf. I had a two-page scene of dialogue, I walked across stage nude, I kissed a guy, and I got my throat cut!

SS: Nice start!

MF: And my mom came to see that, too! (Laughs) My brother was with her, and



LEFT. At last, a role with some dignity attached to it! *THE DAY MY PARENTS RAN AWAY* starred Frewer as Bob Miller, a parent who (surprise!) runs away to Camp Second Chance. RIGHT. One of several incarnations of the character, MAX HEADROOM starred Frewer in the dual roles of Max and Edison Carter. Amanda Pays costarred.

apparently when I walked on stage nude she just went, "Oh, dear!"

SS: There's my son's chosen career!

MF: Exactly! (Laughs)

SS: How did the character Max Headroom come about?

MF: That originated in London again, in England. Chrysalis Records was looking for some kind of VJ or Video Jockey to pump their artists abroad. They were looking for some kind of mid-Atlantic Video Jockey figure. They got together with a fellow called George Stone, and he got together with two commercial directors called Rocky Morton and Annabelle Jankel. George had seen this NASA in-house training film with a character called User-Friendly, who was a sort of prototype computer-generated man. He thought, "Wow, I wonder if we could do something with that to get this VJ idea off the ground!" They realized that things just weren't technologically advanced enough to do it as an actual computer-generated construct, so they had to get a live human being in rubber makeup to do it. There was a North American actor friend of mine in London, who said he didn't think he was right for it but knew somebody who was—how often does that happen? I came along and auditioned, and it was 10 or 15 minutes ad libbing around a half dozen lines of dialogue. I passed that test and then had to screen test for the other character, the Edison Carter character, and got it from there.

SS: How difficult was it to work as Max in all that makeup?

MF: Some days it was very difficult and other days it wasn't too bad. It depended completely on how much water they put in the mold. It really sounds like an odd thing to say, but if they put too much water in the mold when they make the rubber pieces, when they fire it, the water evaporates off and it has the consistency of leather. So I'm doing this huge smile

underneath and it comes out like sort of a little mail-slot mouth. (Laughs) I had a difficult, because I felt like I was fighting this kind of Hannibal Lecter mask—but in terms of working, in a lot of ways it was actually very freeing. I was wearing a mask and theoretically Max wasn't real, so theoretically nothing he said could be misconstrued as libelous. I could go to town and just roast celebrities all over the place! That's when it was the most fun, just going to town with those interviews.

SS: Did you ever find that the makeup overshadowed your own contributions?

MF: No, but it cuts both ways. After MAX finished, the kind of anonymity of the character meant that I wasn't typecast. By the same token, I was saying, "That was me under there, by the way; I had to live in all that stuff!"—so it cuts both ways. The long and the short of it is, I was grateful to that bite of the cherry because I arrived in L.A. with having played a dual lead in a high-profile series. I didn't have to do any pavement pounding. From that point of view, it was amazing!

SS: Would you ever revive Max Headroom?

MF: There was a lot of talk, but it's so tied up in legal roadblocks that it's very unlikely it's going to happen. I think, by the time that gets unknotted, it's gonna be past its sell-by date! (Laughs)

SS: You have a reputation for ad-libbing. Do you ever find scripts restrictive?

MF: Not if they're good. If they're good, then I'm the first one to stick with the script hook, line, and sinker! If they're a little shaky, my mind tends to wander and I'll chuck more of my own stuff in. I tend to do it more with comedy, because it becomes a democratic process where hopefully it's going to be best job wins and it doesn't matter who had the actual idea. With drama, it's more difficult—but no, if the script is great I don't want to touch it!

SS: Any room for ad-libbing as Sherlock?

MF: We changed a few little things as we went, but for the most part I really thought it was a wonderful rendition of the story, I thought it was great! I was really happy with the script, so there was a lot.

SS: Good! Do you think *DOCTOR DOCTOR* would have stood a better chance if CBS hadn't kept moving it around?

MF: Oh, yeah! It was on three different nights, and eventually it was on Sunday morning after songs of praise! (Laughs) They said, "Well, it wasn't getting the ratings!" Yeah, no wonder; it was on at 11am! Eventually, they said, "Well, we might have a deal with the USA Network, but it means relocating to Miami and shooting it on videotape. At a certain point you say, 'Well, there's a watered-down product if ever there was one and it's probably better to walk away after doing 40 episodes that were happy and proud of . . .'"

SS: *DOCTOR DOCTOR* was ahead of its time, with a regular gay character.

MF: Yes, absolutely! Definitely! That was one thing that Norman Steinberg, our executive producer, was great about. He really fought strongly for that and felt strongly about it. It was ahead of its time and now that's all you hear about—the token gay character on blah, blah, blah—we were at that point in the early eighties!

SS: And there was no fanfare about it?

MF: That's the thing that was so cool about it, that he was just a guy and he happened to be gay. The only time it really came up was if there was any affectionate joking between that character and his brother. It was never really addressed in the way network television does it now, with, "Oh, my God, we've got to sensitively tiptoe around this." They're making such a big deal about not making

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ANOTHER X MAN THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X

"For God's sake, get him to play something other than Duke Mantee!"

—Jack Warner to Vincent Sherman

by Ken Hanke

Dismissed for years because—whatever else it is—this is anything but a sequel to Michael Curtiz' 1932 horror classic, *DOCTOR X, THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* is mostly remembered today as one of the lesser films of Humphrey Bogart. (The fact that the story involves synthetic blood as opposed to the original's synthetic flesh, and the presence of a Doctor Xavier—though certainly not the Doctor Xavier—are about the only connections.) Occasionally, it is even cited as Bogart's worst film, a statement obviously made by critics, historians, and fans who have never seen *ISLE OF FURY* (1936), *MEN ARE SUCH FOOLS* (1938), or, God forbid, *SWING YOUR LADY* (1938). The truth is that, no, it's not in the same league as *DOCTOR X*, but neither is it Bogart's worst picture. On its own merits, *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* is an efficient little thriller with a sense of style and a few pleasant idiosyncrasies, along with a smattering of the kind of glorious illogic that makes B pictures such loopy fun.

One of the most unusual aspects of *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* is simply the question of why it was made at all. If it was Warners' attempt to cash in on the second wave of horror that began in 1939, it was a strangely tepid endeavour that led nowhere, since the studio pretty thoroughly eschewed the genre throughout the forties. (There were a few notable exceptions, including Frank Capra's *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE*, made in 1941 but held till 1944, and Robert Florey's *THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS* in 1946.) Unlike the Columbia Karloff "Mad Doctor" films, the Lugosi Monogrammers, Universal's revived monster movies, RKO's Val Lewton films, Paramount's tabloid terrors, etc., Warners' *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* is a little picture altogether out there on its own—either a late holdover from horror's first wave, or an overture to the opera of the second wave that, in the case of Warner Bros., never came. Perhaps the picture it most resembles is Michael Curtiz' *THE WALKING DEAD* (1936)—though with a tighter budget and more hardened tone.

The film marked the third occasion of Vincent Sherman and Humphrey Bogart working together. Previously, Sherman had worked on the screenplays of *CRIME SCHOOL* (1938), for which he was also dialogue director, and *KING OF THE UNDERWORLD* (1939). He graduated to director status with *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* at the suggestion of Warner B Unit head Bryan Foy (formerly one of vaudeville's famed Seven Little Foys). Sherman told *Scarlet Street's* Todd Livingston that he was given a choice between a remake of *KID GALAHAD* and *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X*, and took *RETURN* immediately, vaguely suggesting that it seemed better than redoing a successful film of a mere two years earlier. (Anyone who has seen the *KID GALAHAD* 1941 remake, *THE WAGONS ROLL AT NIGHT*, is not likely to question his judgment.) Plus, as Sherman also told *Scarlet Street*, in a statement rare among toilers in the genre, he actually liked horror movies, because they had theatrical possibilities . . .

Within the limits of his bargain basement budget, Sherman did right by those possibilities, almost to the point of having Jack Warner kill his directorial career before it began. According to a memo to Foy cited by Jeffrey Meyers in

Bogart: A Life in Hollywood (Houghton-Mifflin, 1997), "The first day of Sherman as a director, he took a 45 second take 10 times. If he does this again, he won't be on the picture any longer. I will not stand for over three takes and they will have to be good." Sherman's troubles didn't end with Warner, but extended to the presumably good-natured devility of his crew. In the chapter on Sherman in *Warner Brothers Directors: The Hard-boiled, the Comic, and the Weepers* (Arlington House, 1978), William R. Meyer writes, "The first time he looked through the camera he found the arc lights placed in view of the lens. Precocious assistants asked the rookie filmmaker if he wished the lights in the shot, and more put-ons followed throughout the day." It wasn't the most auspicious of beginnings in either case, but Sherman came through.

In later years, Bogart himself was less than kind about *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X*. In *The Motion Picture Guide, N-R, 1927-1983* (Cinebooks, 1986), Jay Robert Nash and Stanley Ralph Ross quote Bogart: "This was one of those pictures that made me march into Jack Warner and ask for more money again . . . You can't believe what this one was

like. I had a part that somebody like Bela Lugosi or Boris Karloff should have played. I was this doctor brought back to life, and the only thing that nourished this poor bastard was blood. If it had been Jack Warner's blood, or Harry's, or Pop's, maybe I wouldn't have minded so much. The trouble was they were drinking mine, and I was making this stinking movie."

Studio publicity had, in fact, indicated that the film was being considered for Messrs. Karloff and Lugosi, but there's little evidence that this was anything more than a trade item meant to boost interest in the film's production. According to Sherman in this issue of *Scarlet Street*, Bogie "enjoyed doing it. He wasn't complaining about it. Neither was I. We were happy to be working." Bolstering Sherman's comments are the remarks of costar Dennis Morgan in *Round Up the Usual Suspects: The Making of Casablanca—Bogart, Bergman, and World War II* (Hyperion, 1992), by Aljean Harmetz, "It was a very bad script, and they put a white streak down his head so he

looked like a skunk. He laughed about it as much as the rest of us did. He wasn't sulky. His attitude was 'Come on, let's get through this thing.'"

In many respects, it's difficult not to agree with Bogart's point on a purely personal level. The part was clearly not one likely to boost his career. (Screenwriter Lee Katz is cited in Harmetz's book as saying that the picture was actually a punishment doled out by Jack Warner.) Although receiving third billing on the opening credits—and strangely, top billing on the closing ones—Bogart doesn't make his entrance until the little 62-minute movie is already 22 minutes old. His horror makeup is decidedly unsettling, but Bogie ends up looking a little too much like the caricature of Peter Lorre found in numerous Warner Bros. cartoons! Apparently, the white streak in the hair was Sherman's idea, conveying that the character had been electrocuted (which doubtless would have come as a surprise to President Clinton's similarly streaked mother), as was Bogie's entrance with the white rabbit.



Marshall Quesne (Humphrey Bogart) does his best "Lennie and the rabbit" impression for Dr. Michael Rhodes (Dennis Morgan). It's a Warner Bros. film, but it's not true that Bugs Bunny was originally cast as Quesne's companion.



LEFT: For publicity purposes, Humphrey Bogart puts a few finishing touches on his deadly makeup for *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* (1939), his one and only horror movie role. RIGHT: Percy Westmore makes up Lya Lys as the dead-then living-then dead Angela Merrova.

Whether such touches made *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X*, as Sherman hoped, "believable," is open to question. However, they did help make it as good as possible—and, questions of logic to one side, they were aided by a more than workmanlike screenplay by Lee Katz, one that was far removed from the "very bad" script of Dennis Morgan's comment. (As with Bogart, one wonders if Morgan isn't measuring the quality of the film based more on the thanklessness of his own participation than anything else.) There are several aspects of the script that are actually quite clever, though some may not be apparent to the first-time viewer not wholly familiar with the plot. For example, after meeting Bogart's character, Marshall Quesne (née Maurice J. Xavier), for the first time, Dr. Rhodes (Morgan) remarks, "Strange looking creature, isn't he?" "Yes, rather," responds Dr. Flegg (John Litel) noncommittally. "What is it? Terminal case of primary anemia?" asks Rhodes. "No, he hasn't completely recovered from a very severe . . . shock," deadpans Flegg, which is certainly a major understatement concerning an electrocuted killer! Much of the film's dialogue is either cleverly conceived or what might best be called Horror Movie Prime. If the script has any significant failing, it lies in many of the storyline's inherently illogical plot details, and a somewhat forced chase/shoot-out ending that very nearly does exactly that which Warner himself didn't want, by turning the horrific medico into a zombified Duke Mantee!

Somewhat peculiarly, *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* begins with a studio disclaimer assuring the viewer that the story is fiction and the characters equally so. Whether Warner was being absurdly cautious (did anyone really think this was a new installment in the William Dieterle/Paul Muni biopics?) or using this to goose the sensationalism of the proceedings is anybody's guess. Whatever the reason, it sets the tone for much of what is to follow, as do the marvelously atmospheric credits and the wonderful main title theme by Bernhard Kaun, who creates a piece that clearly recalls his similarly uncredited main title music for the original *DOCTOR X*. Indeed, Kaun served—invari-



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Typical of the period and the genre is the fact that the story centers on a wisecracking reporter, but with a twist that only partly works. For some reason it was deemed necessary to create a comic reporter hero, Walt "Wichita" Garrett (Wayne Morris), and team him with a more appropriate leading man hero, Dr. Mike Rhodes (Dennis Morgan). The approach is a throwback to the stage convention in which the romantic lead was separate from the show's comic—a concept even more dated after the string of reporter heroes (including *DOCTOR X*'s Lee Tracy) who also functioned comically throughout the thirties. Worse, the idea shortchanged both Morris, whose glib self-assurance in the film's opening quickly degenerates into cornified (what else with the soubriquet of "Wichita?") stumblebum antics, and Morgan, who is largely humorless and called on to do little more than look attractive and provide a viable romance for Rosemary Lane's Joan Vance.

This reservation aside, the film's opening is splendidly achieved with remarkable economy. Following a snappy newsroom opening, during which Garrett sets up an interview with stage star Angela Merrova (Lya Lys) to get her views on love for a fluff piece, we see the actress attacked in her room by a shadowy figure. Garrett arrives on the scene only to find his interview subject uncommunicative in the extreme, owing to her having been murdered.

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that the scene is framed by an occasional table with a glamour photo of Merrova displayed on it. Not only does this make for a striking composition, but it personalizes her apartment in effective cinematic shorthand. And shorthand is certainly essential in a thriller wherein the first victim (a glamorous victim, mind— even the seams of her stockings are impeccably straight!) is found dead exactly three minutes into the proceedings!

The business of Garrett stealing a march not only on the other papers but also on the police ("Nobody knows it—not even the cops. Let 'em read about it in the paper") is good, standard Ben Hecht-styled newspaper comedy, but Katz finds a new wrinkle in the time-honored reporter-gets-in-bad-with-bogus-story concept. It's certainly not unexpected that the police arrive only to find the corpse has somehow skedaddled. ("First she was murdered and then she was kidnapped?") Nor is one surprised to find the discredited reporter subjected to the obligatory ribbing of his coworkers. (Huntz Hall's Pinky character cannot resist singing a bit of "Coming Thru the Rye" on encountering Garrett.) Somewhat less expected, though, is finding the missing corpse very much alive and sitting in the editor's office, planning to sue the paper for \$100,000 damages—a nice little chill made all the more so by virtue of Sherman's handling of her closeups. Sherman never shoots Merrova so that her face is visible except in close shot, isolating her from the other characters and giving her a strangely disconnected, otherworldly aura, an effect augmented by the theatrical use of a heavy veil when Garrett becomes too curious about her appearance.

Naturally, Garrett's little error in reportage gets him sacked. Firmly convinced that Merrova couldn't possibly have survived the knife wound he examined, he opts to pursue the mystery with the help of his medico buddy, Mike Rhodes. Thanks to clever scripting, it turns out that Rhodes is a lot more closely connected to Merrova's death and resurrection than anyone, himself included, realizes. It quickly becomes apparent, especially when a transfusion volunteer expected at the hospital is murdered, that whatever is afoot is connected to persons with an unusual blood type—and Rhodes' mentor, the brilliant surgeon Dr. Flegg (John Litel), is a specialist in hematology ("Interesting stuff, blood—make a thorough study of it, Rhodes. It's important enough for you to devote your whole life to it.") Flegg also seems just a little too interested in the last minute replacement of Joan Vance as a blood donor.

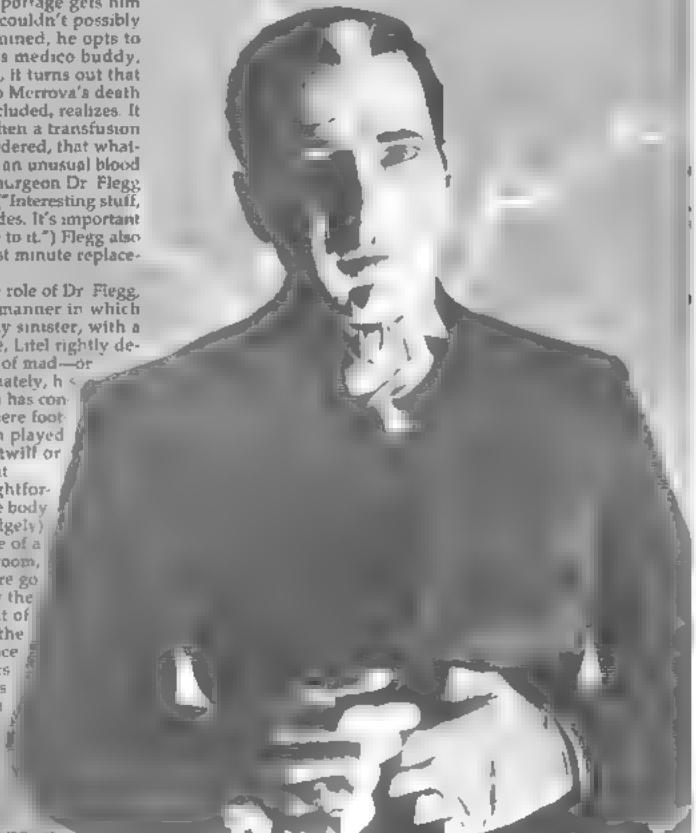
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twice-skeptical Lieutenant Kincaid (Charles Wilson). "Well, I'll tell you, Lieutenant, there's pro and con . . ." offers Garrett, only to be dismissed as Kincaid focuses on Rhodes examining one of the corpse's "The blood . . . see, drained out of the body," Rhodes tells him. "I know that, but where is it? That's what I want to know. There's only a few stains around," snaps Kincaid, who proceeds to voice his suspicion that Rhodes—or at least some other medical practitioner—murdered Rodgers. "The coroner tells me that man wasn't stabbed. He was operated on with a surgical instrument—and by someone who knew how to use it." (This is another tenuous connection to *DOCTOR X*, in which the "Moonkiller" murders are committed by someone wielding a type of scalpel used in brain dissections.)

The most enlightening fact of the coroner's report, however, has escaped Kincaid—that the blood stains found in the room are "group four." "That's impossible, unless the murderer was wounded," Rhodes tells the hapless detective, explaining that Rodgers was a "group one" blood type. This prompts one of the film's more peculiar scripting moments, when Kincaid asks if Rhodes is suggesting that whoever killed Rodgers was after "group one" blood. "It's possible," opines Rhodes, without bothering to explain or even suggest any remotely plausible theory as to just why someone would be out for blood.

Rhodes' own examination of a blood sample from Rodgers is even more suggestive. "It doesn't even look like human blood." This idea greatly appeals to Garrett, who's obviously seen *MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE* (1932) one too many times. "Gorilla murder! Oh, Mike, if you can

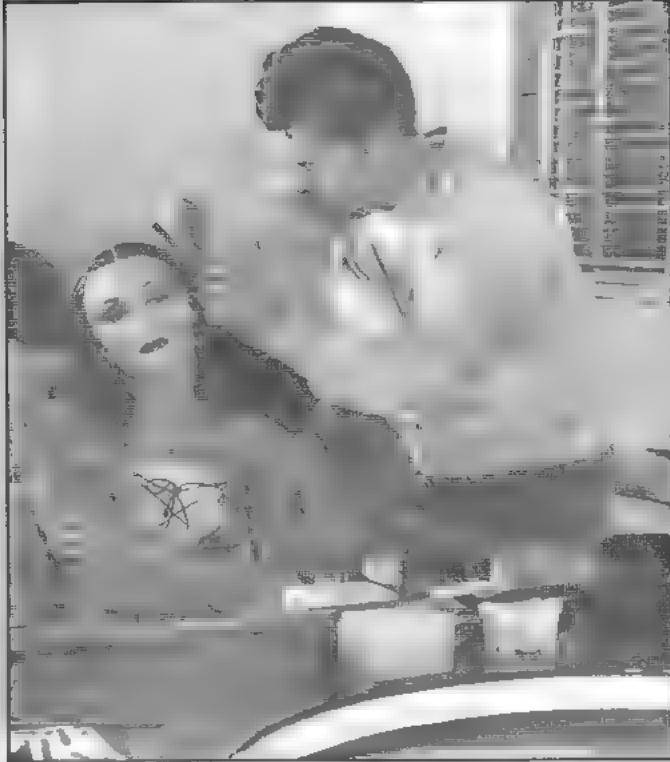




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John Litel is close to perfection in the role of Dr. Flegg, thanks in no small part to the bravura manner in which Sherman presents the character. Suavely sinister, with a monocle seemingly glued to his right eye, Litel rightly deserves some small niche in the pantheon of mad—or at least overzealous—scientists. Unfortunately, his status as something less than a genre icon has consigned both him and his Dr. Flegg to a mere footnote in horror history. Had the role been played by Lugosi or Karloff, or even Lionel Atwill or George Zucco, the story might be different.

The plot proceeds to follow a straightforward, but very serviceable, path when the body of blood donor Stanley Rodgers (John Ridgely) is discovered. Called to the scene because of a note bearing his name in the dead man's room, Rhodes is accompanied by Garrett ("Where go the police, there go I"), who is struck by the fact that the corpse looks not unlike that of Angela Merrova (prior to her turn for the better). "Look at this guy—look at his face and look at his body," Garrett instructs. "Why, there's no color," notes Rhodes. "Yeah—that's exactly the way Merrova looked when I found her in her bedroom," Garrett explains. "I suppose this geezer's alive, too?" sneers once-bitten-

twice-skeptical Lieutenant Kincaid (Charles Wilson). "Well, I'll tell you, Lieutenant, there's pro and con . . ." offers Garrett, only to be dismissed as Kincaid focuses on Rhodes' examination of the corpse. "The blood's been drained out of the body," Rhodes tells him. "I know that, but where is it? That's what I want to know. There's only a few stains around," snaps Kincaid, who proceeds to voice his suspicion that Rhodes—or at least some other medical practitioner—murdered Rodgers. "The coroner tells me that man wasn't stabbed. He was operated on with a surgical instrument—and by someone who knew how to use it." (This is another tenuous connection to DOCTOR X, in which the "Moonkiller" murders are committed by someone wielding a type of scalpel used in brain dissecting.)

The most enlightening fact of the coroner's report, however, has escaped Kincaid—that the blood stains found in the room are "group four." "That's impossible, unless the murderer was wounded," Rhodes tells the hapless detective, explaining that Rodgers was a "group one" blood type. This prompts one of the film's more peculiar scripting moments, when Kincaid asks if Rhodes is suggesting that whoever killed Rodgers was after "group one" blood. "It's possible," opines Rhodes, without bothering to explain or even suggest any remotely plausible theory as to just why someone would be out for blood!

Rhodes' own examination of a blood sample from Rodgers is even more suggestive. "It doesn't even look like human blood." This idea greatly appeals to Garrett, who's obviously seen MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE (1932) one too many times. "Gorilla murder! Oh, Mike, if you can





LEFT: Dr. Rhodes pays a visit to Dr. Flegg (John Litel) to discuss blood types, and meets a gentleman with a very peculiar blood type indeed—Marshall Quesne, alias the electrocuted Dr. Xavier! RIGHT: Angela Merrova is practically dead to the world when Rhodes and his reporter friend, Walt "Wichita" Garrett (Wayne Morris), pay a visit. Soon, Quesne pays a visit and "practically" is no longer a consideration.

figure that one out we'll have a front page spread on every newspaper in the United States for weeks!" "Oh, I must be ready for the bug house or something, but it doesn't even seem to be animal blood," admits Rhodes. Ditching Garrett (he thinks), Rhodes takes the slide sample to the most obvious expert: Dr. Flegg.

At this point, the film develops an odd, almost obsessive pattern that runs throughout its length. *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* becomes markedly voyeuristic, with characters (notably Garrett and Quesne/Xavier) peering through windows and listening in on conversations. Though not overly stressed, the approach imbues the film with a vaguely uncomfortable—almost unwholesome—tone. Beyond the implications inherent in any voyeuristic act, it also conveys a sense of personal invasion to the viewer, making it hard to keep from wondering whether it mightn't be wise to see who's loitering outside his or her own window.

This is also where Bogart's character is introduced into the proceedings. No matter how unfortunate he may have found the assignment, it's impossible to deny that he and Sherman and Katz thoroughly understand the fundamentals of the horror film and do them proud. The startling shift in tone is immediately obvious. Prior to Rhodes's entrance into Flegg's private surgery, the film has largely boasted what is best described as a Warner Bros. look, a kind of harbinger to *film noir*. (A notable exception is Rhodes' post-surgery encounter with Flegg in the scrub room, which utilizes slightly more sinister lighting.) In Flegg's sanctum sanctorum, the lighting becomes unabashedly melodramatic. Strong shadows cast theatrically from improbable angles are the order of the day, heightened by the brilliant use of a baby spotlight trained to precisely hit and virtually whiteout Quesne's already whitened face as he appears in a doorway, his entrance punctuated chillingly by Kaun's score. The effect is accentuated further by cutting—after he asks "Looking for something?"—to a medium close tracking shot of Quesne entering the room, cradling the rabbit like a zombified Lennie. The effect is markedly creepy, and, while the more bravura aspects of the scene give way to almost classical horror film dialogue, the feeling that there's something more than usually nasty going on never wavers.

Rhodes: I was looking for Dr. Flegg.

Quesne: What is it you want?

Rhodes: I wanted to speak to him about a blood smear. I'm Dr. Rhodes.



Quesne: Oh! Dr. Rhodes. How do you do? My name is Quesne. I've often heard Flegg speak of you.

Rhodes: Oh . . . yes?

Quesne: Yes. He thinks you show great promise, particularly in the study of blood composition.

Rhodes: That's very kind of him.

Quesne: I may wish to discuss that subject with you myself someday . . .

Rhodes: I'd like to anytime.

Quesne (noticing Rhodes' attention has been drawn to the rabbit): Oh—he's ill. We're both victims of . . . At this point Flegg enters the room—and, in keeping with the voyeuristic tone, he's overheard Quesne's last remark.

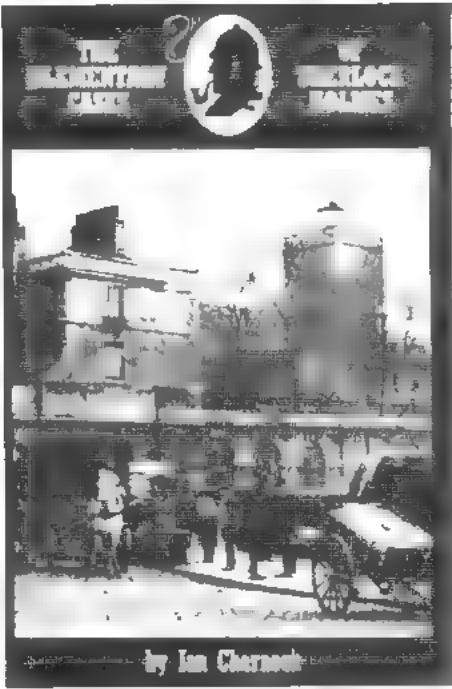
Flegg: Of what? Go on, Quesne. Victims of what?

Quesne: Circumstance.

The beauty of the scene really lies in Bogart's playing. His performance is silky, understated, insinuating, almost feminine and flirtatious. (Bogart's natural lisp lends a clichéd sexual ambiguity to Quesne, just as it lends a certain "realism" to Philip Marlowe's "playing pansy" in 1946's *THE BIG SLEEP*.) His motives are unclear—and are left vague—to the point that one wonders exactly what he and Flegg have said about Rhodes! Certainly, Rhodes' reactions are those of one trying to politely overcome an unwelcome advance—and this feeling is only strengthened by Flegg's knowing smile when Quesne clumsily offers "Circumstance" as the end of his indiscreet statement. Indeed, as the film progresses the actual relationship between Flegg and Quesne becomes increasingly murky, with the two men seemingly locked in a power game that isn't completely explained by the plot.

The followup scene, in which Flegg and Quesne examine the blood smear, is similarly fine in its utter theatricality. Both men obviously know more than they're willing to divulge to Rhodes, playing out their inside knowledge in a series of exchanged glances ranging from suspicion to fear to accusation, most especially when Flegg hears of Rodgers' murder. On the surface, Flegg becomes brusquely dismissive of Rhodes' observation that the blood is not ordinary "group four." "I don't know how to explain it, but hasn't it some sort of . . . artificial quality?" insists Rhodes, causing Quesne to shatter a beaker in his hand. This creates—for Flegg—a welcome diversion. "What have you done?" explodes Flegg. "Clumsy fool! Go into the office and bandage it. See that you're more careful." His temper and superior attitude very obviously grate on Quesne, who is not com-

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fortable in this subservient role, but manages to pause on his way out to shoot Rhodes a sly, enigmatic smile!

No sooner has Flegg rid himself of the suspicious young medico than Angela Merrova, looking a solid three days beyond death warmed over, arrives—an event spied on by Garrett, just as everything leading up to it has been. Once in the doctor's office, Merrova promptly faints! Brought around, she explains, "I feel cold. My ears are ringing. I can hardly breathe."—much to the perversely growing delight of Quesne, who appears to relish the shift in power this gives him over Flegg. "Yeah," he agrees. "You see, Flegg? I told you. You'll never find what you're looking for. You're a failure, Flegg!"

"You're lying," snaps Flegg. "What does he mean you're a failure?" asks Merrova. "Nothing—nothing, I assure you," he answers, then turns on Quesne. "I haven't failed yet. Now get out of here." Quesne's triumphant look as he leaves more than suggests that both men know—and both know the other knows—that Flegg has indeed failed, though as yet the viewer doesn't know at what. With Quesne gone, Flegg jolts Merrova's sagging condition with a quick blood transfusion.

Continuing the voyeuristic tone, Garrett eavesdrops when Flegg visits Rhodes the following morning to ask him to forget the previous night ("Forget everything and everyone you saw at my home last night—we'll call it professional ethics.") Garrett pops into the room as soon as Flegg departs. "Now do you still think he's an innocent bystander?" he asks. "I still don't think he's a murderer, if that's what you mean," argues Rhodes. "All right, what would you think if I told you that Angela Merrova paid him a little visit last night and she had a blood transfusion? Now, do you still think I'm wacky?" inquires Garrett. "You sure it was Merrova?" asks Rhodes, somewhat incredulously. "Am I sure? Brother, there's a face I'll never forget! Oh, and another thing I'd like to point out to you—did you notice the peculiar coloring on that kiss of Quesne's?" adds Garrett (as if anyone could miss it). "Yeah—like a piece of white marble," agrees Rhodes. "Like something dead, huh?" presses Garrett. "Yeah, I remember when I shook his hand, it was cold and lifeless like a dead person's," Rhodes recalls, then offers Flegg's explanation for Quesne's appearance. "Well, whatever it is," Garrett rightly points out, "Merrova's got that same cold graveyard look."

Pursuing this line of reasoning, the duo pay a call on Merrova that evening and find her stretched out on a chaise lounge, like a body in state. At first she's incensed by the intrusion, but agrees to answer their questions after she briefly passes out. Asking about her blood type, Rhodes explains, "Somewhere in this city there's a murderer at large. The only possible clue we have is that he seems to be interested in obtaining type number one blood. Yesterday morning a young chap named Stanley Rodgers was found murdered in his apartment. He was type number one. His body was completely drained of blood. And another thing,

the knife wound was identical to that which Mr. Garrett found on you." "This is not true," she objects, adding, "Mr. Garrett suffers from hallucinations." "Not since I was fourteen," he interjects. "Remember, you may be helping us to save someone else's life," urges Rhodes, whereupon, somewhat too easily, she relents. "Very well. It's true. When you called me for an interview, as I hung up the phone, I realized someone had entered the room. I was terrified. A hand went over my mouth and then I felt a sharp pain in my chest. Then I lost consciousness." The next thing she remembered was waking up in her room the next morning. "Well, why didn't you tell all of this to the police?" wonders Rhodes. "I didn't want that kind of publicity," she explains. "But can't you just give us a hint on who stabbed you and where he took you afterwards?" urges Garrett. At this, she brushes them off with a promise of coming to Garrett's office in the morning and explaining all. Suddenly, Quesne shows up in the room. (Sherman introduces him in the identical manner as before—background long-shot followed by medium close tracking shot) "I'm sorry to disturb you gentlemen, but as you can see, Miss Merrova is . . . ill." "Oh, we were just leaving," explains Garrett. "Yes, that's very considerate of you," comments Quesne, adding, "By the way, Doctor, I haven't forgotten that you and I are to have that talk on blood composition." As soon as Quesne ushers the two snoops out, he turns menacingly and advances toward the terrified actress.

Unfortunately, the film errs by interjecting some jarring newspaper comedy, with Garrett and Rhodes going to the editor with the good news about Merrova's about face, only to learn that Merrova has died—again!—and of natural causes. Too brief to seriously harm the film, the scene nonetheless does it no favors, though matters quickly right themselves with a rather more successful bit of ghoulish humor at the funeral parlor to which Merrova's body has been con-

signed. "Do you have a . . . uh, a customer in here by the name of Angela Merrova?" Garrett asks in the most delicate manner he can muster. "You mean the body of the deceased?" inquires the undertaker (Olin Howland) with an alarming directness. Helpfully, he explains that Dr. Flegg called on him to come retrieve the body. "Thank you very much, sir. I hope to see you again," says Garrett. "I'm sure you will," agrees the undertaker.

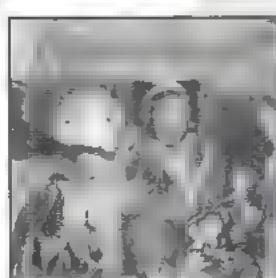
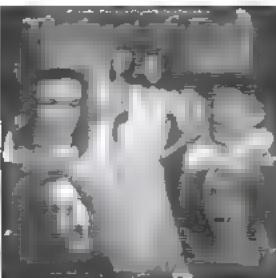
Stymied again, Garrett tries to trace Quesne through the files at the newspaper. "But I tell you, there's nothing on a guy named Quesne," an antsy Pinky assures him, while keeping one eye out for the boss. "There's gotta be. I've seen his puss in some paper," insists Garrett. "Ahhh, you've tried every file but x, y, and z and here's the final batch," grouses Pinky, throwing him the last of the files. Of course, X marks the spot: "I got it! The guy—Dr. Maurice Xavier, Dr. X!" "Hey, that's that guy that starved that little



Humphrey Bogart as Doctor X

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MARCHING THROUGH HOLLYWOOD

VINCENT SHERMAN

interviewed by
Todd Livingston

Vincent Sherman was the consummate studio director, often taking less than spectacular projects, rewriting the scripts, and turning them into memorable motion pictures—usually on a salary much lower than his contemporaries. In the process, he directed Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Joan Crawford, Claude Rains, Rita Hayworth, Peter Lorre, Ava Gardner, and Ronald Reagan, to name just a few. In his riveting autobiography, *Studio Affairs* (1996 University Press of Kentucky), Sherman writes candidly about his career and his romantic relationships with Davis, Crawford, and Hayworth.

Meeting Vincent Sherman a few days after his 93rd birthday, it was obvious how this energetic, creative man from a small Georgia town had become a successful triple threat of actor/writer/director for Warner Bros., giving moviegoers such wonderful films as *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* (1939), *THE HARD WAY* (1942), *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT* (1942), *MR. SKEFFINGTON* (1944), and *NORA PRENTISS* (1947).

Scarlet Street: You began your career as an actor in New York. What was the city like in the twenties and thirties?

Vincent Sherman: When I came to New York in '26 or '27, it was a wonderful



town. I thought it was great. *The New York Times* was two cents in the morning. The Sunday paper was 10 cents. The subway was a nickel. You could go to the theater—second balcony seats were 55 cents. New York was a charming place. I came to New York with an old college friend of mine and we found a place for \$10 a month—we shared a room up on West 98th Street. We had written a play, but we couldn't sell it and I had to get out and make a living. I had done a little acting, but I didn't go to New York expecting to be an actor. In the South in the twenties, if you said you were going to be an actor, people would look down on you. Actors were bums. They were fly-by-night adventurers, and you couldn't make a living as one.

SS: Did you find it difficult to establish yourself as an actor?

VS: It was a long struggle for me. First of all, I had a Southern accent. But I finally got a job as an extra at the Theater Guild. It was lucky for me, because I was with some very interesting people, very progressive and very artistic. The first play I was in was Eugene O'Neill's MARCO'S MILLIONS, with Rouben Mamoulian directing. I had about eight changes—I ran up five flights of steps! (Laughs) But I learned a great deal and I used to watch Alfred Lunt, who I thought was a marvelous actor and a great talent. Playing a small role in one scene was Sanford Meisner. Then one summer, I got a job as a dramatic counselor at a children's camp. And it was wonderful experience—directing children. It was a very successful summer. It wasn't much later that I got the call from my agent asking me if I wanted to go to Hollywood to screen test for the part of the young Communist in COUNSELLOR AT LAW, which I did with John Barrymore.

SS: You couldn't ask for a better start in the movies than working with Barrymore isn't that right?

VS: Then I was cast in about six B pictures at Columbia, mostly as a gangster. I never got to play anything else! I got sick of it! Elmer Rice, who had formed the Federal Theater, offered me a job back in New York, so my wife and I moved back and I directed a few plays for the Federal Theater. I got an offer to go out on the road in a company of DEAD END, and played the part of the gangster! (Laughs) Baby Face Martin—the role Bogart played in the film. The company went all over the country and came back out to Hollywood. I was at the Biltmore Theater playing Baby Face, and that's when a friend of mine, Sheila Manners, an actress who had been the former girlfriend of William Wyler, introduced me to Bryan Foy. We talked for a while and he offered me a job as a writer at Warner Brothers.

SS: So you had to go from Hollywood back to New York to make it in Hollywood! Was THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X your first directing credit?

VS: Yes, it was. After working for Bryan as a dialogue director and writer, he brought me into his office to tell me that Warner wanted to develop some new directors. When he suggested me, Warner agreed. They gave me a few things to look at, a remake of KID GALAHAD and a mystery/horror called THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X. I took THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X immediately.

SS: Boris Karloff and then Bela Lugosi were announced for THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X. How did Humphrey Bogart wind up playing the mad zombie doctor?

VS: I never heard any talk about the possibility of that. Of course, Karloff and Lugosi were already actors. That could have been a publicity note, but there was no talk of putting them in that picture. Jack Warner told me, "I'm giving you this guy Bogart, and for God's sake see if you

can get him to play something besides Duke Mantee." (Laughs)

SS: How did Bogart feel about playing Dr. X?

VS: He enjoyed doing it. He wasn't complaining about it. Neither was I. We were happy to be working. We were both from New York, and the theater was lousy in those days; there were no jobs. So being able to get a check every week was a wonderful thing.

SS: What were your own feelings about directing a horror movie? Did you try to bring anything to it that you wouldn't have to a straight drama?

VS: I'd never done a horror picture, but I liked them. I liked the theatrical possibilities. I knew I wanted to put as much humor as I could into it. I knew it was a cornball, ridiculous story. Bogart played a guy who was brought back to life—he



Vincent Sherman in 1940

had been electrocuted. That's why I put the white streak in his hair. He needed human blood, and that's why he went around killing people. I put the business in of him carrying a rabbit around always, because it was warm. I knew it was corny, but I came from the theater and Bogart came from the theater. Whatever we were given, whether it was lousy or corny, we just said we'd do the best we can with it and make it as believable as possible and as good as possible.

SS: At the time, were you aware of the memo Jack Warner sent producer Bryan Foy, saying you were doing too many takes?

VS: I wasn't aware of that. I know that both Warner and Foy liked the picture. My God, when I look at the piece now, I think, "Well, it wasn't bad." Did you ever see it?

SS: Oh, yes! It has quite a following among horror buffs.

VS: It did all right. And now it's kind of a cult thing with Bogart. In fact, that was the third time I worked with him. The first time was in CRIME SCHOOL. Then I worked with him again in KING OF THE UNDERWORLD. I rewrote the script for that. Then came my first job as a director, THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X. Then I did a couple of pictures in between, but as a result of a successful picture called UNDERGROUND, they gave me my first big A picture—ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, also with Humphrey Bogart.

SS: You knew Bogart, both before he made it big and after. Did success change him?

VS: Well, it was gradual. In other words, before he did ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, he did HIGH SIERRA, which Raft had turned down. Then he was accepted as a leading man. Then he did THE MALT-

ESE FALCON and was also the lead in that. Prior to that, Bogart would never have been considered a possibility for a leading man. He was just a villain—a heavy. If you had said to anybody Bogart was going to be a lover with Ingrid Bergman, people would have laughed at you and said "Don't be ridiculous!" And no director would accept him as a leading man, but ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT sealed him as a possible leading man.

SS: You directed two of Hollywood's best loved character actors: Sydney Greenstreet in ACROSS THE PACIFIC and Peter Lorre in ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT

VS: I worked with Sydney Greenstreet at the Theater Guild. Very nice man to work with, Greenstreet. Peter Lorre was fabulous, an intellectual. He was a very progressive guy. He was very well read. He was an expert on wine. What brought him to this country was his performance in Fritz Lang's M, which was absolutely a landmark film. I thought he was sensational in it. He came to this country and he wanted to make great films. One of his first films here was CRIME AND PUNISHMENT for Columbia, but it wasn't successful and he was reduced to

making a series of films for Fox based on the character Mr. Moto. He gave up the thought of being a serious actor, and became very bitter towards Hollywood. He used to come to the set in the morning and say, "Well, we'll make faces today, huh, brother Vince?" (Laughs) And he began to do imitations of himself. He was very disillusioned with Hollywood. It was on ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT that he met Kaaren Verne. I had her in a picture before—UNDERGROUND. A very beautiful German girl—very sweet and very nice. He fell in love with her and years later they went back to Germany and were married.

SS: Didn't the studio want to remove ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT's classic double talk scene?

VS: Oh, yeah! Hal Wallis didn't like it when I proposed it. I said if I can't do that scene, I'm not going to do the picture. We put it in anyway, when he was in New

York. When he came back and saw it at his house, he said, "Who's running the studio—you or me?" I said, "You, of course, Hal." "Well, didn't I tell you I didn't like the double-talk?" I said, "Hal I had to have something there to get them out of the dilemma they were in." So he turned to Rudi, the cutter, and said, "Can you take all that double-talk out?" Rudi explained that he could take most of it out, but had to keep the first line in to make a smooth cut. Wallis told him to take out everything he could. So he did. Well, a few weeks later we went to the preview and, sure enough, when the scene came

didn't hear any laughter. Then, suddenly, the audience caught that line and you didn't hear the rest of the scene, they were laughing so hard. When Wallis came out, he said, "All right. Put the double talk back in." (Laughs)

SS: Did the crew enjoy shooting it?

VS: Oh, they loved it! Bill Demarest and Bogart were both having fun with it.

SS: ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT has an incredible supporting cast. For example, there's Conrad Veidt!

VS: He was a wonderful actor! One day I picked up his script and I noticed meticulous directions written on the page, like "pick up pencil," "lift eye-brow," I said, "You don't leave me too much room for creativity." He said he always had to know exactly what he was doing in a scene in order to be comfortable. Well, he came in one day—he had a big speech to do in the big meeting, and I had rewritten it that night. I gave it to him in his dressing room and said to him, "Connie, last night I read your speech and it wasn't quite right, so I did some rewriting." He said, "It's very good, but we can't do it today. Maybe tomorrow." I told him I had to do it today. He said, "Oh no. I told you once before—rewrites you have to give me a day ahead." It was a language problem for him, and he was very finicky about the details. I told him, "I'm setting up the shot now. You've got a.most two hours to study the new scene. Just learn the first paragraph, then we'll pick up." He said, "I can't do it—it's impossible! It's impossible!" Well, two hours later when we did it he did the whole damn speech letter perfect! He hated me for it. Later he said he'd never work with me again. Funny thing is, he would brag that this was what he was most proud of—that he did that speech with only two hours preparation! (Laughs) He was a wonderful guy, a marvelous actor.

SS: You also had two actors who later made it extraordinarily big in television—Phil Silvers and Jackie Gleason.

VS: They were not known in those days. Warner called me a few days before I was to start and said he had a couple of comics he wanted to put in the picture. I told him I didn't have any parts for them. I had all the comedians I needed. I had Bill Demarest and others. He said, "Make some parts." So I said for them to meet me at the office in the morning. I told them I didn't have any parts for them, but if they had some jokes Gleason could be a henchman of Bogart's and Silvers could be a waiter in the place where Bogie came to have cheesecake. The next day Gleason brought in two pages of jokes and Silvers brought in 20 pages! (Laughs)

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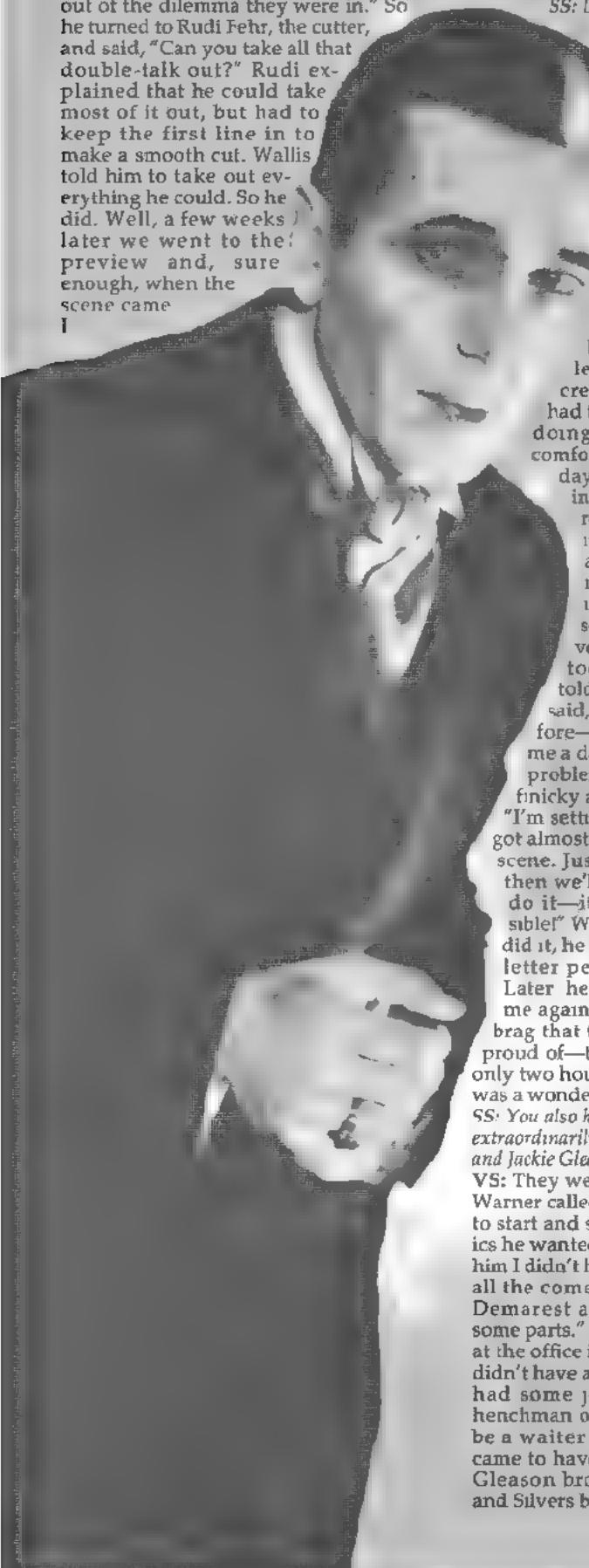
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York. When he came back and saw it at his house, he said, "Who's running the studio—you or me?" I said, "You, of course, Hal." "Well, didn't I tell you I didn't like the double talk?" I said, "Hal, I had to have something there to get them out of the dilemma they were in." So he turned to Rudi Fehr, the cutter, and said, "Can you take all that double-talk out?" Rudi explained that he could take most of it out, but had to keep the first line in to make a smooth cut. Wallis told him to take out everything he could. So he did. Well, a few weeks later we went to the preview and, sure enough, when the scene came

didn't hear any laughter. Then, suddenly, the audience caught that line and you couldn't hear the rest of the scene, they were laughing so hard. When Wallis came out, he said, "All right. Put the double talk back in." (Laughs)

SS: Did the crew enjoy shooting it?

VS: Oh, they loved it! Bill Demarest and Bogart were both having fun with it.

SS: *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT* has an incredible supporting cast. For example, there's Conrad Veidt . . .

VS: He was a wonderful actor! One day I picked up his script and I noticed meticulous directions written on the page, like "pick up pencil," "lift eyebrow." I said, "You don't leave me too much room for creativity." He said he always had to know exactly what he was doing in a scene in order to be comfortable. Well, he came in one day—he had a big speech to do in the big meeting, and I had rewritten it that night. I gave it to him in his dressing room and said to him, "Connie, last night I read your speech and it wasn't quite right, so I did some rewriting." He said, "It's very good, but we can't do it today. Maybe tomorrow." I told him I had to do it today. He said, "Oh, no. I told you once before—rewrites you have to give me a day ahead." It was a language problem for him, and he was very finicky about the details. I told him, "I'm setting up the shot now. You've got almost two hours to study the new scene. Just learn the first paragraph, then we'll pick up." He said, "I can't do it—it's impossible. It's impossible!" Well, two hours later when we did it, he did the whole damn speech, letter perfect! He hated me for it. Later he said he'd never work with me again. Funny thing is, he would brag that this was what he was most proud of—that he did that speech with only two hours preparation! (Laughs) He was a wonderful guy, a marvelous actor.

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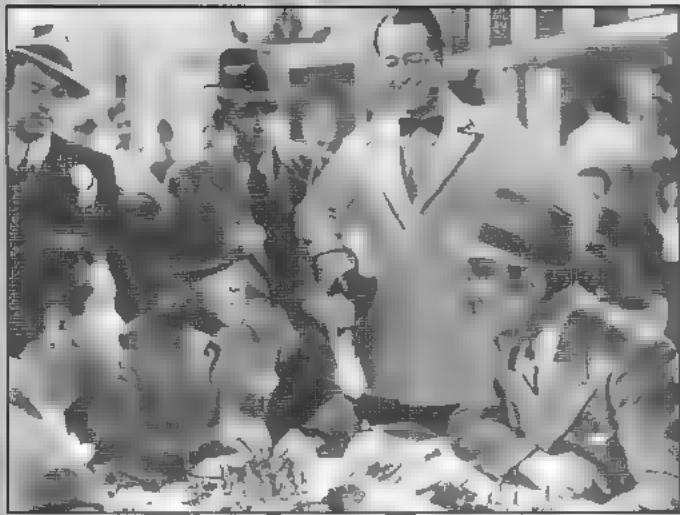
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LEFT: Having already appeared on stage in the Ida Lupino, Jay COUNSELLOR AT LAW (1933), Vincent Sherman joined the Great Profile, John Barrymore, in the William Wyler film version. CENTER: Mary Astor, Humphrey Bogart, and Sydney Greenstreet, all veterans of THE MALTESE FALCON (1941); were reunited for ACROSS THE PACIFIC (1942). FALCON director John Huston began the film, but Sherman completed it. RIGHT: Don't let the smiles fool you—Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins went for the jugular on OLD ACQUAINTANCE (1943).

LeRoy Prince, the dance director, to do the dances. Now, what I did was coordinate with him. I explained to him what I was doing just prior to the dance number. Then he staged the number. I had no experience in that sort of thing. And I thought he did a very good job.

SS: *THE HARD WAY* is a shoubiz story, told in film not words.

VS: Coming from New York, I wanted to bring some reality to the piece. I wanted to show what show business was like behind the scenes. I wanted to capture all the fighting that went on to go ahead, and I think we caught that. I had trouble with Ida Lupino in the beginning. I didn't want the women to wear shiny makeup. I wanted the film as realistic as possible, especially in the coal-mining town. Ida got very worried. In fact, during the second week, I asked her to do something and she said, "This picture's gonna stink and I'm gonna stink in it." I said, "You just do as I ask you to do, Miss Lupino, and you'll probably win an award." She said, "Humumph" and walked away.

SS: She was certainly wrong. *THE HARD WAY*'s reputation has grown with the years.

VS: Nobody liked the picture when I finished it. Everybody thought it was a very downbeat picture. In fact, a couple of directors said, "Why did you want to do that picture? It's such a downbeat, dreary movie. And that woman is such a terrible person!" I said, "I don't see it that way. I feel it's a very human struggle about success in the theater and success in life. And I think Ida plays a sympathetic character. Underneath all her drive and all the dirty things that she's doing, you can see a human being, especially in that scene with Dennis Morgan, where he kisses her. You see her lose her cover. That's gonna tell the audience a great deal about her—that she has suppressed her own desires to get her sister ahead. And that will show you her vulnerability." And it worked.

SS: It worked beautifully!

VS: Now, when we ran the picture at Warner's house without the prologue and epilogue, he said, "Boys, I think we've got a flop on our hands." I was so depressed. He said, "Vince, who cares about these dirty people in the coal mines?" I told him it doesn't stay that way, they go to New York—to the theater. He said, "By that time, you've lost your audience." So I

started improvising. I said, "Suppose we open up where Ida's very well dressed, and she goes down to the waterfront. She's ready to kill herself. We don't know why. She's fished out and brought to a hospital, and then we go back into her life." And he liked that. He said, "Good. Write it and get it done." The only person who liked the picture was Don Siegel, who later became a director himself. Don did the montages for me, and he called me to tell me he thought it was a hell of a movie. But nobody thought so until it went to New York and got great reviews, and Ida won the New York Film Critics Award as the best actress of that year. Later, Ida said that was the best picture she ever made! She thought I was the best director she ever worked with.

SS: Ida Lupino gives a superb performance in *THE HARD WAY*. Why didn't she become one of Warner's biggest stars?

VS: That very question came up when the picture was screened at Telluride a few years ago. An exhibitor said, "You know, if she had made another picture or two as good as *THE HARD WAY*, it would have elevated her into number one. She just didn't get it, but she was very talented—a very good actress. I thought she was great in *THE HARD WAY*, really wonderful. Later, we became very good friends. I did two more pictures with her, and I saw her a short while before she died. She called her secretary and said she'd like to see me. I went up and spent an afternoon with her. And she laughed. I would imitate the way she'd come onto the set in the morning, all nervous and everything. Her secretary called later and told me she said that was the best time she'd had in a long time. Wonderful girl, wonderful girl. Her personal life was tragic, but that was part of the course for most Hollywood actresses. Rita Hayworth had a terrible personal life. Bette Davis had a terrible personal life. Joan Crawford's personal life was lousy! But working with all of them—they were wonderful people. Rita Hayworth was the saddest girl I've ever met. Very insecure. Was aware of the fact that men wanted her and exploited her—they thought they were marrying Golda. She was not a great conversationalist. She had no real education. But when she had to dance—it was like something was turned on inside. She came to life. Won-

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LEFT: Director Vincent Sherman looks better suited to direct a noirish mystery than *THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN* (1948). Errol Flynn stands at the left, Jerry Austin at the right. CENTER: Wendell Corey wasn't the first man to look properly befuddled by the strong-willed, insecure Joan Crawford. Sherman directed the pair in *HARRIET CRAIG* (1950). RIGHT: A Sherman favorite was "Dumb Girl" Ann Sheridan, who Sherman directed in the melodramatic *NORA PRENTISS* (1947). BELOW: Flynn and Viveca Lindfors in *THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN*.

out until years later I enjoyed making the picture. We had fun with it. The cast was wonderful. Sol Polito, the cameraman—I had never worked with him. He was Michael Curtiz's favorite cameraman. He was wonderful.

SS: You've said that, during the making of *OLD ACQUAINTANCE*, you felt like you weren't directing the picture, but referring to it.

VS: Well, when I made that crack, Davis laughed like hell and Miriam didn't think it was very funny. A lot of funny things happened on that picture. One day, Miriam was sitting at a table and I saw one of the lighting guys go up with his meter to check the lighting. Then I saw him give the meter to another guy. The other guy goes up—he's checking the lighting. Three or four more guys go up there—they're checking the lighting. I thought, "What the hell's going on here?" Well, I walked up to Miriam, I looked down—she had no bra on! (Laughs) All those guys were having a look!

SS: Did Davis and Hopkins really hate each other or were they just competitive?

VS: I think it was both. When we started the picture, Bette said, "Now you watch her. As I get older, she'll get younger." She said that's what Miriam did to her on *THE OLD MAID*. It was jealousy of Miriam's part. I found out why later on. It was because Miriam was a Southerner.

She came from Georgia, not too far from where I'm from, and she did a play in New York called *JEZEBEL*, written by Owen Davis. And it was a flop. It lasted one week. Well, Davis did the picture and won an Academy Award! Miriam was very skillful, by the way, as a comedian. Very good. In a certain sense, Miriam stole the picture. Of course, she overacted, but that was her character.

SS: How did you keep them from trying to steal scenes from each other?

VS: There was one day when Bette had to shake Miriam. Bette said to me the night before, "Now, Vincent, the script says I have to shake her, and Goddammit, I'm going to shake her! And don't let her screw it up." The next morning, sure enough, my assistant told me Miriam wanted to talk to me. She said, "Vincent, dear, I know Bette has to shake me and I'm going to cooperate, but please tell her not to be too violent. I slept badly last night and I have a crick in my neck." I told

Bette and she said, "Goddammit, I knew she would come up with something!" I told her to forget about it and play the scene the way she had to play it. Well, we did the scene, and instead of resisting like anyone normally would, Miriam let her head go and wobble around like a broken doll. Bette looked at me—she was furious! So I stopped and went over to Miriam, and she said, "I was only trying to cooperate." (Laughs)

SS: They had quite a history together.

VS: Bette was a bit player when Miriam starred in a play up in Rochester, New York called *EXCESS BAGGAGE*. Another time on *OLD ACQUAINTANCE*, Miriam had a cigarette holder and she kept waving it in front of Bette's face! I'd say, "Miriam, you can't do that." And she'd say, "I was only trying to match what I did before." (Laughs) She would always have excuses! And she was always watching where the camera was going to be placed. When we were rehearsing a scene, she'd be watching Bette, but she'd also be looking at me and the cameraman to see where we were going to put the camera. Towards the end of filming, she said, "I hope I didn't give you any trouble, but you see, I'm just a guest star here and this is Bette's home lot. I figured I had to watch for myself." I told her if my own mother were in the picture, I would n't favor her. I'd favor the picture.

SS: Bette I thought was the queen of the *Warriors* lot, though, right?

VS: The night that we finished filming *OLD ACQUAINTANCE*—two o'clock on a Sunday morn-

ing. I had to take Bette home in my old Plymouth. She said she wanted a sandwich, a hamburger. We stopped, and she said, "Well, Mr. Sherman, it's been wonderful working with you in spite of the trouble we had with Miriam. But you handled her better than I did—and I love you." I said, "I love you, too." Then she put her hand on my hand and said, "You don't understand. I mean I really *love* you."

SS: *MR. SHEFFINGTON* was another Bette Davis picture and a great one. Is it true that Davis was self-conscious about her looks?

VS: That was one of the problems I had with *SKEFFINGTON*. She was playing a beautiful woman and she never thought she was a beautiful woman. That's the reason she put on a higher voice. She thought that would make her younger.

SS: The film's title role was played by Claude Rains.

VS: Yes, I knew Claude from the theater. We were very good friends.

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LEFT: Having already appeared on stage in the Elmer Rice play *COUNSELLOR AT LAW* (1933), Vincent Sherman joined the Great Profile, John Barrymore, in the William Wyler film version. CENTER: Mary Astor, Humphrey Bogart, and Sydney Greenstreet, all veterans of *THE MALTESE FALCON* (1941), were reunited for *ACROSS THE PACIFIC* (1942). FAICON director John Huston began the film, but Sherman completed it. RIGHT: Don't let the smiles fool you—Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins went for the jugular on *OLD ACQUAINTANCE* (1943).

LeRoy Prince, the dance director, to do the dances. Now, what I did was coordinate with him. I explained to him what I was doing just prior to the dance number. Then he staged the number. I had no experience in that sort of thing. And I thought he did a very good job.

SS: *THE HARD WAY* is a showbiz story, told in film noir terms.

VS: Coming from New York, I wanted to bring some reality to the piece. I wanted to show what show business was like behind the scenes. I wanted to capture all the fighting that went on to get ahead, and I think we caught that. I had trouble with Ida Lupino in the beginning. I didn't want the women to wear any makeup. I wanted the film as realistic as possible, especially in the coal-mining town. Ida got very worried. In fact, during the second week, I asked her to do something and she said, "This picture's gonna stink and I'm gonna stink in it!" I said, "You just do as I ask you to do, Miss Lupino, and you'll probably win an award." She said, "Humphph," and walked away.

SS: She was certainly wrong. *THE HARD WAY*'s reputation has grown with the years.

VS: Nobody liked the picture when I finished it. Everybody thought it was a very downbeat picture. In fact, a couple of directors said, "Why did you want to do that picture? It's such a downbeat, dreary movie. And that woman is such a terrible person!" I said, "I don't see it that way. I feel it's a very human struggle about success in the theater and success in life. And I think Ida plays a sympathetic character. Underneath all her drive and all the dirty things that she's doing, you can see a human being, especially in that scene with Dennis Morgan, where he kisses her. You see her lose her cover. That's gonna tell the audience a great deal about her—that she has suppressed her own desires to get her sister ahead. And that will show you her vulnerability." And it worked.

SS: It worked beautifully!

VS: Now, when we ran the picture at Warner's house without the prologue and epilogue, he said, "Boys, I think we've got a flop on our hands." I was so depressed. He said, "Vince, who cares about these dirty people in the coal mines?" I told him it doesn't stay that way, they go to New York—to the theater. He said, "By that time, you've lost your audience." So I

started improvising. I said, "Suppose we open up where Ida's very well dressed, and she goes down to the waterfront. She's ready to kill herself. We don't know why. She's fished out and brought to a hospital, and then we go back into her life." And he liked that. He said, "Good. Write it and get it done." The only person who liked the picture was Don Siegel, who later became a director himself. Don did the montages for me, and he called me to tell me he thought it was a hell of a movie. But nobody thought so until it went to New York and got great reviews, and Ida won the New York Film Critics Award as the best actress of that year. Later, Ida said that was the best picture she ever made! She thought I was the best director she ever worked with!

SS: Ida Lupino gives a superb performance in *THE HARD WAY*. Why didn't she become one of Warners' biggest stars?

VS: That very question came up when the picture was screened at Telluride a few years ago. An exhibitor said, "You know, if she had made another picture or two as good as *THE HARD WAY*, it would have elevated her into number one. She just didn't get it, but she was very talented—a very good actress. I thought she was great in *THE HARD WAY*, really wonderful. Later, we became very good friends. I did two more pictures with her, and I saw her a short while before she died. She called her secretary and said she'd like to see me. I went up and spent an afternoon with her. And she laughed—I would imitate the way she'd come onto the set in the morning, all nervous and everything. Her secretary called later and told me she said that was the best time she'd had in a long time. Wonderful girl, wonderful girl. Her personal life was tragic, but that was par for the course for most Hollywood actresses. Rita Hayworth had a terrible personal life. Bette Davis had a terrible personal life. Joan Crawford's personal life was lousy! But working with all of them—they were wonderful people. Rita Hayworth was the saddest girl I've ever met. Very insecure. Was aware of the fact that men wanted her and exploited her—they thought they were marrying Gilda. She was not a great conversationalist. She had no real education. But when she had to dance—it was like something was turned on inside. She came to life! Won-

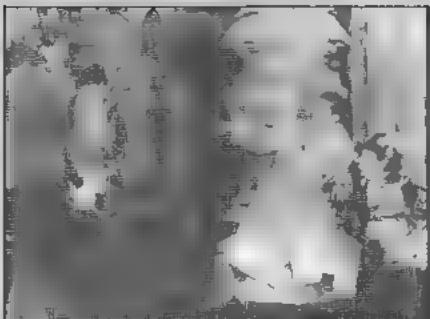
derful girl, very sweet. I really liked her very much.

SS: You were called in to shoot the final scenes of *ACROSS THE PACIFIC*, which was being directed by John Huston.

VS: One morning as I arrived at my office, a phone call came from Warner. He wanted me to go down to the set of *ACROSS THE PACIFIC* and have a talk with John, who was leaving the picture the next day. He wanted me to take over the direction. He said John had to go into the army. I told him I couldn't believe the army wouldn't let him finish the film. And Warner said to me, "It's not only that. The poor guy is having other troubles. His wife comes in one door as Olivia de Havilland walks out the other, and sometimes he doesn't know what he's doing." (Laughs) Jerry Wald got me a script and when I went to the set at about 10:30 in the morning, everyone was screwing around, going over new dialogue. They hadn't made a shot yet! I watched the assembled footage that had been shot so far and I thought it was pretty good, but the latter part of the script was ordinary. I thought I could improve it. But Warner said we were already way over budget and he didn't want to spend any more money on it. Well, I just did the best I could as quickly as I could. I didn't ask for or want any credit for it. Later, in his autobiography, John treated the whole episode like a joke. He said that, before he left, he had arranged to have Bogart so tied up that no one could get him out of it. He added that I was assigned to the task, but was less than successful. There's no doubt that he was capable of such a prank, but I don't think he was engaged in one at the time. I think he realized that the ending of the script wasn't up to the first part and didn't know what to do with it. In that situation, and under the emotional pressure from his romantic life, he used the army to get away.

SS: You directed *OLD ACQUAINTANCE* with Bette Davis and Miriam Hopkins. Wasn't Edmund Goulding originally assigned to direct it?

VS: I was told he had a heart attack, but Goulding didn't want to do it. Goulding got sore, I learned later on, because he wanted a particular cameraman and Davis wanted a different cameraman—and the studio went with Davis. I didn't find this



LEFT: Director Vincent Sherman looks better suited to direct a *noirish* mystery than **THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN** (1948). Errol Flynn stands at the left, Jerry Austin at the right. CENTER: Wendell Corey wasn't the first man to look properly befuddled by the strong-willed, insecure Joan Crawford. Sherman directed the pair in **HARRIET CRAIG** (1950). RIGHT: A Sherman favorite was "Oomph Girl" Ann Sheridan, who Sherman directed in the melodramatic **NORA PRENTISS** (1947). BELOW: Flynn and Viveca Lindfors in **THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN**.

out until years later. I enjoyed making the picture. We had fun with it. The cast was wonderful. Sol Polito, the cameraman—I had never worked with him. He was Michael Curtiz's favorite cameraman. He was wonderful.

SS: You've said that, during the making of **OLD ACQUAINTANCE**, you felt like you weren't directing the picture, but refereeing it.

VS: Well, when I made that crack, Davis laughed like hell and Miriam didn't think it was very funny. A lot of funny things happened on that picture. One day, Miriam was sitting at a table and I saw one of the lighting guys go up with his meter to check the lighting. Then I saw him give the meter to another guy. The other guy goes up—he's checking the lighting. Three or four more guys go up there—they're checking the lighting. I thought, "What the hell's going on here?" Well, I walked up to Miriam, I looked down—she had no bra on! (Laughs) All those guys were having a look.

SS: Did Davis and Hopkins really hate each other or were they just competitive?

VS: I think it was both. When we started the picture, Bette said, "Now you watch her. As I get older, she'll get younger." She said that's what Miriam did to her on **THE OLD MAID**. It was jealousy on Miriam's part. I found out why later on. It was because Miriam was a Southerner. She came from Georgia, not too far from where I'm from, and she did a play in New York called **JEFZEBEL**, written by Owen Davis. And it was a flop. It lasted one week. Well, Davis did the picture and won an Academy Award! Miriam was very skillful, by the way, as a comedian. Very good. In a certain sense, Miriam stole the picture. Of course, she overacted, but that was her character.

SS: How did you keep them from trying to steal scenes from each other?

VS: There was one day when Bette had to shake Miriam. Bette said to me the night before, "Now, Vincent, the script says I have to shake her, and Goddammit, I'm going to shake her! And don't let her screw it up." The next morning, sure enough, my assistant told me Miriam wanted to talk to me. She said, "Vincent, dear, I know Bette has to shake me and I'm going to cooperate, but please tell her not to be too violent. I slept badly last night and I have a crick in my neck." I told

Bette and she said, "Goddammit, I knew she would come up with something!" I told her to forget about it and play the scene the way she had to play it. Well, we did the scene, and instead of resisting like anyone normally would, Miriam let her head go and wobble around like a broken doll. Bette looked at me—she was furious! So I stopped and went over to Miriam, and she said, "I was only trying to cooperate!" (Laughs)

SS: They had quite a history together.

VS: Bette was a bit player when Miriam starred in a play up in Rochester, New York called **EXCESS BAGGAGE**. Another time on **OLD ACQUAINTANCE**, Miriam had a cigarette holder and she kept waving it in front of Bette's face! I'd say, "Miriam, you can't do that." And she'd say, "I was only trying to match what I did before." (Laughs) She would always have excuses! And she was always watching where the camera was going to be placed. When we were rehearsing a scene, she'd be watching Bette, but she'd also be looking at me and the cameraman to see where we were going to put the camera. Towards the

end of filming, she said, "I hope I didn't give you any trouble, but you see, I'm just a guest star here and this is Bette's home lot. I figured I had to watch for myself." I told her if my own mother were in the picture, I wouldn't favor her. I'd favor the picture!

SS: Bette Davis was the queen of the Warners lot, though, right?

VS: The night that we finished filming **OLD ACQUAINTANCE**—two o'clock on a Sunday morn-

ing—I had to take Bette home in my old Plymouth. She said she wanted a sandwich, a hamburger. We stopped, and she said, "Well, Mr. Sherman, it's been wonderful working with you in spite of the trouble we had with Miriam. But you handled her beautifully and—I love you." I said, "I love you, too." Then she put her hand on my hand and said, "You don't understand. I mean I really love you."

SS: **MR. SKEFFINGTON** was another Bette Davis picture and a great one. Is it true that Davis was self-conscious about her looks?

VS: That was one of the problems I had with **SKEFFINGTON**. She was playing a beautiful woman and she never thought she was a beautiful woman. That's the reason she put on a higher voice. She thought that would make her younger.

SS: The film's title role was played by Claude Rains.

VS: Yes, I knew Claude from the theater. We were very good friends. I was just a bit player at

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*Shaken,
Not Stirred...*

BOND on DVD

by John J. Mathews

James Bond fans who have suffered through Ted Turner's commercial-laden telecasts of the 007 movies can now sit back and relax, as they can finally view their DVD player. Twelve Bond epics have been re-

mastered to best-ever image quality, top-notch supplemental features, and a host of other extras. The discs are available in two special slipcased collections, with a third volume due in October 2000. For those high-tech agents who possess the new 16:9

THE JAMES BOND COLLECTION: VOLUME ONE contains seven titles, starting with **GOLDFINGER** (1964) and **THUNDERBALL** (1965). These are the first two of the 12 movies to be released in the new format. The collection also includes **DR. NO** (1962), **From Russia with Love** (1963), **Goldfinger** (1964), **Thunderball** (1965), **On Her Majesty's Secret Service** (1969), **Live and Let Die** (1973), and **Die Another Day** (2002).

fans' lists of favorites. Sean Connery had hit his catlike stride as 007, with his trademark blend of hero, hedonist, and hip quipster. The clever and amusing script provided the series' most memorable villains (Gert Frobe's Auric Goldfinger and Harold Sakata's Odd

(the Aston Martin DB5). It also inaugurated the now-requisite action-packed pretitle sequence, which each new Bond film in turn is obliged to surpass.

earnings record. All the classic Bond elements are present in peak form—the Connery quips are abun-





PAGE 60 TOP to BOTTOM: James Bond and Miss Moneypenny (Sean Connery and Lois Maxwell) engage in some of their usual banter, Bond (Roger Moore) gives a toothpick to Jaws (Richard Kiel) in *LIVE AND LET DIE* (1973), Bond (Pierce Brosnan) and Natalya Simonova (Izabella Scurupco) destroy another means of travel in *GOLDENEYE* (1995), and Jill Masterson (Shirley Eaton) goes for the gold in *GOLDFINGER* (1964). ABOVE: Bond (Connery again) stands in front of the most famous Bond gimmick—the Aston Martin DB5.

dant, the girls are drop-dead gorgeous (as Fiona Volpe, the voluptuous Luciana Paluzzi may be the sexiest Bond villainess of all), and the gadgets are plentiful, including the rocket backpack and the second and final appearance of Bond's Aston Martin. The first of the films to be shot in 2.35:1 Panavision, *THUNDERBALL* looks great on wide-screen DVD. The underwater scenes, which can look murky and cramped on pan-and-scan tapes, greatly benefit from this presentation.

In the first of his seven appearances as 007, Roger Moore put his own suave stamp on the role in *LIVE AND LET DIE* (1973). This film may not measure up to the others in terms of spectacle, but it definitely holds its own—particularly with its memorable Louisiana bayou boat, car, and double-decker bus chase, and the equally memorable screen debut of the beautiful Jane Seymour as Solitaire. The entertaining behind-the-scenes documentary is among the best of the discs, featuring engrossing interviews and rare onset footage.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY (1981) is a fan favorite among the Roger Moore Bonds because of its return to a more hard-hitting, less gadget-laden plot (except for the jokey pretitle sequence, which does dirt of the character of Ernst Stavros Blofeld). Moore gets a chance to do some relatively serious spying rather than just suavely tossing off the quips between action scenes. The over-the-top set pieces are well in evidence, however, the best being the gasp-inducing finale atop the Italian Alps.

The second of the two Bond films to star Timothy Dalton as 007, *LICENCE TO KILL* (1989) is certainly a change of pace. The grimmest, most serious of the series (and the first to be rated PG-13), it allows Dalton to display his considerable dramatic talents. The grim, gritty storyline and realistically odious villain (Robert Davi as Franz Sanchez, a violent drug smuggler) make this an unusual and effective entry.

Six years later, *REMINGTON STEELE* star Pierce Brosnan made his debut as 007 in *GOLDENEYE* (1995), a spectacular post-Cold War spy actioner that was a box-office smash. It solidly established Brosnan as the ideal Bond for the nineties and beyond. Also included on this disc is the 1995 Fox-TV special *THE WORLD OF 007*, hosted by Elizabeth Hurley.

In his second Bond feature, *TOMORROW NEVER DIES* (1997), Brosnan shares the action with Asian superstar Michelle Yeoh as Colonel Wai-Lin, and shares the bedroom with the fetching Teri Hatcher (formerly Lois Lane on *LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN*) as Paris Carver. A campily villainous Jonathan Pryce plays manipulative media mogul Elliot Carver (Ted Turner take note), who schemes to start World War Three for his own profit. Brosnan's scenes with Michelle Yeoh help make this entry great fun.

THE JAMES BOND COLLECTION: VOLUME TWO contains five titles, starting with *DR. NO* (1963), the start of 007's big-screen career. Besides being an excellent thriller, it's fun to watch this film in the context of the entire series, observing the genesis of Bond's screen character. And it's hard to top the allure of leading lady #1, Ursula Andress as Honey Ryder, whose voice, the impressive documentary featurette reveals, was dubbed throughout the film by another actress. Also on this disc is *BOND VIVANT*, an informative biographical piece on director Terence Young.

ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE (1969) is undoubtedly the most controversial film in the series, engendering both fan praise and scorn—sometimes in the same breath! One of the most accomplished (and truest to source) Bond scripts was paired with the least experienced Bond portrayer. The merits of George Lazenby's performance aside, *OHMSS* is loaded with unique and exciting elements,

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Dark Passages

The World of Film Noir

...matured earlier in its installments in our mini-series section on *Dark Passages*. Here are *excerpts* from a few of the accepted books at a few runs that push the envelope as they push them down the stairs...

contributions by

Ross Care

Jeff Allen

Lelia Loban

Barry Monush

John F. Black

Paul M. Jensen

Michael Mallory

THE BIG SLEEP (1946)

Every *noir* aficionado knows that Howard Hawks' *THE BIG SLEEP* is a landmark. Equally well known is the fact that the plot of the film is so labyrinthine that it is nearly impossible to follow in the first viewing. But until recently, only a handful of people knew how much the release version of the film had been altered from the one originally shot.

Hawks began shooting *THE BIG SLEEP* for Warner Bros. in the fall of 1944 with his current favorite stars, Humphrey Bogart—who contributed the definitive portrayal of Raymond Chandler's tough, sardonic, but honorable shamus, Philip Marlowe—and Lauren Bacall. It was not an easy shoot: by the time the picture wrapped in January 1945, it was more than 30 days over schedule.

For decades, film scholars pondered why the picture's release was held back until the fall of 1946. Only recently has the original 1945 version surfaced, demonstrating that *THE BIG SLEEP* was substantially reshot in early 1946. What was lost from the original version was clarity. The 1945 *BIG SLEEP* is somewhat easier to follow, thanks to a reel-long expository scene in which Marlowe and his police friend, Bernie Ohls (Regis Toomey), lay out the litany of murders for the D.A. (Thomas E. Jackson). But what was gained in the new footage was a dramatic increase in the heat generated by Bogie and Bacall. In the original version, Bacall's Vivian Sternwood Rutledge was much more of a mystery woman and somewhat cool towards Marlowe. But the final version of *THE BIG SLEEP* is so sexually charged that it could be titled *THE SLEEPOVER*.

The film's plot is nearly impossible to summarize, but here goes nothing. Dying General Sternwood (Charles Waldron) hires Marlowe to get a blackmailer off his back. The blackmailer, a creep named Arthur Gwynne Geiger (Theodore von Eltz), has incriminating photographs of Sternwood's nymphomaniac daughter Carmen (19-year-old Martha Vickers, in a lascivious performance that must have given the Breen Office palpitations). Sternwood's other daughter Vivian, a knockout with a taste for gambling, seems only marginally tamer. Geiger is killed by the General's chauffeur, Owen Taylor (Dan Wallace), one of Carmen's lovers, who retrieves the pictures. He in turn is killed by . . . well, even Chandler himself didn't know who killed Taylor!

A weak-willed con named Joe Brody (Louis Jean Heydt) sapped Taylor to get the photos for blackmail, but denies sending his car off a pier. Brody in turn is killed by a young hood named Carol Lundgren (Tom Rafferty), another of Carmen's lovers. Vivian attempts to pay off Marlowe, but he remains on the case, determined to find the missing Sean Reagan, a confidant of the General's who disappeared along with the wife of a gangster named Eddie Mars (John Ridgely), whose henchman, Canino (Bob Steele), whacks a pathetic little grifter named Harry Jones (the great Elisha Cook, Jr.) who was infatuated with Brody's ex-mistress, Agnes Lowzner (Sonia Darsin), in an attempt to retrieve the notorious photos. Marlowe kills Canino in a shoot-out and tricks Mars' other thugs into shooting their boss, then covers up the shocking truth about Carmen and Reagan in order to protect Vivian, with whom he is now in love.

Despite its busyness, somehow the plot isn't important. It is the characters that drive *THE BIG SLEEP*—chiefly

Marlowe, who is depicted as a kind of walking aphrodisiac, and Carmen, the original "poison ivy." One of the film's most jaw-dropping examples of innuendo and double-entendre comes in a scene in which Marlowe stakes out Geiger's shop (which he has already visited in the guise of an outrageously effeminate book collector) from a store across the street. In response to a glass-melting come-hither look from the store's female clerk (Dorothy Malone), Marlowe tells her: "I've got a bottle of pretty good rye in my pocket, I'd a lot rather get wet in here." As delivered, the lines are not easy to make out, but the meaning behind them is: I've got something in my pocket that I want to get wet. Before you can say "Your place or mine?" the clerk has closed shop and pulled down the shades, and a spectacularly unsubtle dissolve denotes a suitable passage of time.

The true gem of innuendo, however, comes in the re-take footage. After a conversation on rife with horse-racing metaphors, Bogie says to Bacall: "I can't tell how far you can go." Delivering a look that burns a hole in the screen, she responds: "A lot depends on who's in the saddle." They just don't write 'em like that anymore! (And let's buy a round for screenwriters William Faulkner, Jules Furthman, and

Leigh Brackett.)

Oddly enough, the one element of Raymond Chandler's novel that doesn't translate to the screen in *THE BIG SLEEP* is the author's widely hailed evocation of Los Angeles. Hawks is far more interested in his characters than where they live, and as a result, the film could be set anyplace that hopeless people stay up all night dreaming in vain of love. (Billy Wilder's 1944 *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, coscripted by Chandler, remains the undisputed champ of L.A. *noir*.)

THE BIG SLEEP was remade in 1975 with Robert Mitchum color, and a far greater leniency in what could be shown on screen. And while the remake contributes a little more sweat than Hawks' original, it can't hold a candle to it in terms of steam.

—Michael Mallory

DRAGNET (1954)

Jack Webb directed *DRAGNET* on the strength of his popular radio (1949-1951) and television (1951-1959) programs of the same name,

recreating his role of Sgt. Joe Friday of the Los Angeles Police Department. The character remained a stalwart, moralistic law-officer striving to contribute a sense of order to the LA of the postwar era. As the film begins, Friday is dispatched to solve the gangland execution of an ex-con who obviously knew too much. Suspicion falls on Max Troy (Stacy Harris), a mobster associate of the deceased Friday and his partner, Sgt. Frank Smith (Ben Alexander, who previously portrayed Smith in the TV series), immediately turn up the heat on Troy and his henchmen by openly tailing them around town. Additionally, undercover policewoman Grace Downey (Ann Robinson) infiltrates The Red Spot, a seedy bar and grill known to the LAPD as one of Troy's hangouts.

Fastidious to a fault, Friday is the kind of civic-minded crusader who pauses to squash a woman's discarded cigarette after interrogating her. Summoned before a grand jury, he passionately defends wiretapping and regrets that the strategy requires a court order. His request denied, Friday's operatives nevertheless maintain their pressure un-



WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE (1962)

PAGE 62: Gene Tierney plots to terminate an unwanted pregnancy in *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* (1945), covered in *Scarlet Street* #34 PAGE 63: Bette Davis and Joan Crawford teamed for the only time for a Hollywood Gothic horror with notish flourishes: *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* (1962). RIGHT: Philip Marlowe and Vivian Sternadale (Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall) are held at bay by Joe Brody (Louis Jean Heydt) in *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946), while Agnes (Sonia Darrin) watches apprehensively BELOW: Preacher Harry Palmer (Robert Mitchum) wrestles with hate in *NIGHT OF THE HUNTER* (1955), review on page 29. PAGE 65 LEFT Jacqueline Gibson (Jean Brooks) might not become *THE SEVENTH VICTIM* (1943) if slater Mary (Kim Hunter) and friends Dr. Louis Judd (Tom Conway), Gregory Ward (Hugh Beaumont), and Jason Hoag (Erford Gage). PAGE 65 RIGHT: The luminous poison in that test tube is also in the bloodstream of Frank Bigelow (Edmund O'Brien, who will soon be D.O.A.) (1950).



til reluctant witnesses finally agree to provide damning testimony against Troy and his unsavory cohorts. A transitory peace is thus restored to the city of the angels.

The hallmarks of Webb's mise en scene can be traced to this production. The plot unfolds conversationally through a procession of closeups and medium shots—even a bloody fist fight is staged in this manner. The supporting cast ape Webb's trademark staccato dialogue readings, punctuated with periodic head nodding. Despite the deadpan ambience, the director's work was certainly that of a true auteur. His singular vision of drama remains instantly identifiable, regardless of medium.

Webb's matter-of-fact enactment of Joe Friday is always entertaining in its sanctimony. The policeman instantly quotes LA county statistics in the manner of a preacher who touts out scripture to justify every moral lesson he wishes to

impart. Webb's digged belief in Friday's persona renders the two of them virtually inseparable: audiences either love him or hate him. Ben Alexander, in the role of colleague Frank Smith, is far less pronounced and seems dull by comparison (even though his physical appearance is reminiscent of the real-life male impersonating jazz-trumpeter Billy Tipton). His character briefly comes to life when Smith instructs undercover officer Downey regarding the style of women's clothing she should select to appropriately blend in with the denizens of The Red Spot. Other than that moment of animation, Alexander serves as a straight man for Webb's blunderbuss bursts of moralistic speechifying.

DRAGNET, though photographed in color, presents the director's black-and-white concept of the world. There isn't room in his thinking for the permeating shades of gray that distinguish the best efforts of the *noir* genre. The film is simply a police procedural in which the brass apprehend the guilty and vindicate the innocent. Friday does pause to ponder one question—"Why does the law always work for the guilty?"—but his own answer is merely a self-righteous one. Irony, a critical ingredient of most *noirs*, doesn't exist in Webb's universe. The real history of the LAPD, extending into this new millennium with allegations of internal corruption, is far removed from Webb's jingoistic whitewashing. He may have been content with "just the facts" as he saw them, but posterity doesn't support his message.

—John F. Black

BLUE VELVET (1986)

David Lynch wrote and directed *BLUE VELVET* in lush color for Dino DeLaurentiis. The surrealistic nightmare begins when Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) returns from school to his sleepy home town of Lumberton. The small town seems idealized, reality as filtered through early television, adrift in time between the fifties and the eighties. Strolling aimlessly in an overgrown, vacant area, Jeffrey finds a severed human ear lying on the ground. He takes it to a family friend, Detective Williams (George Dickerson), then goes sleuthing with the detective's virginal daughter, Sandy (Laura Dern). In their naive inquisitiveness, these two sweet, smart puppies have no idea what they're getting themselves into, yet they both give an impression of inner strength, and Jeffrey's weird sense of humor hints that he's adaptable, a survivor.

Jeffrey snoops through the apartment of lounge singer Dorothy Vallens. Isabella Rossellini plays this role to perfection, unafraid to sing out of tune and reveal her normal-looking body, with more sags and jiggles than most directors prefer on their leading ladies. (Look for composer Angelo Badalamenti as Andy Badale, in a cameo as her pianist at the Slow Club.) Jeffrey hides in Dorothy's closet when she comes home



unexpectedly. Vacillating between guilt, fear, and fascination, he spies as Dorothy undresses. She catches him, threatens to kill him, nicks his face with a huge knife, strips him naked, then sends him back to the closet when her tormenter, small-time mobster Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper), arrives. Frank's got a fetish for blue velvet and he's holding Dorothy's husband and small son as hostages. In the role of this foulmouthed sadist, drug addict, kidnapper, and murderer, Dennis Hopper turns in a stunningly convincing performance. (Recovering drug addict and alcoholic Hopper told Lynch he wanted the role because, "I am Frank.") Jeffrey peeps, horrified and disgusted, but also aroused, as Dorothy grovels in sexual slavery.

Each small decision draws Jeffrey further into this case. To his astonishment, he's soon rolling around in the embrace of the masochistic, mentally disturbed, and much older Dorothy. Her description of sexual intercourse is, "He put his disease in me." It's the disease of the soul, the poisoned fruit of knowledge: good and evil, pleasure and pain. "Hit me," she moans. She spreads the corruption to Jeffrey. When Sandy finds out, she takes some of the taint into herself. The price of solving the mysteries, punishing the guilty, and growing up is loss of innocence.

Throughout, Lynch uses a figurative vocabulary (consciously, the dialogue spells out many of these symbols), including songs, body parts, hoses, flowers, robins, and bugs, to tell a metaphorical story that parallels the literal one. The ear, for instance, serves as an occult labyrinth for the spiritual journey into secrets. The quest ends in knowledge, understanding, represented by the eye. Lynch uses sun and moon, light and dark, and various colors to mean approximately what they mean in the Tarot and related magic. He also makes many references to legends, books, and movies.

Internationally, *BLUE VELVET* received more than 20 nominations for various awards (the Academy tossed Lynch a nomination for Best Director and let it go at that) and even won some, including four from the National Society of Film Critics. Yet, while the sex and bloodshed are less graphic than in many movies of the eighties, *BLUE VELVET* depicts sadomasochistic violence so disturbingly that many reviewers call the film obscene. Hardly anyone expresses indifference. The audience can never hear Bobby Vinton's classic song quite the same way again.

—Leila Lebou

WHILE THE CITY SLEEPS (1956)

The opening title card reads "New York. Tonight." A young woman in her apartment, somewhere in the great metropolis, is thanking a friendly janitor for fixing her plumbing. A knock on the door interrupts and a leather-jacketed young man announces that he is delivering a package from the pharmacy. Unseen by the others, he pushes in the button

lock on the door, assuring himself an unheralded reentry. Once the woman is left alone to prepare her bath, the front door opens, causing her to turn, look at the intruder (the camera, in this instance) with alarm, and scream.

This is the highly intriguing prelude sequence to the 1956 film noir *WHILE THE CITY SLEEPS*, one of director Fritz Lang's last American productions. While the murder plot supplies a reasonable amount of viewer interest, it does not turn out to be the glue that holds the film together. Instead, what keeps this fairly standard suspense hopping along is the interaction of its above-average ensemble cast, who play various denizens of the news world. What's more, with the possible exception of Nancy Liggett (Sally Forrest), the somewhat moralistic girlfriend of Edward Mobley (Dana Andrews), none of these people are above a bit of backstabbing and soul-selling to get what they need.

After the grisly murder takes place, the elderly owner of the Kyne media empire passes away, leaving the business to his resentful son, Walter (Vincent Price), a man who suddenly enjoys the idea of being jettisoned into a powerful position, though he'd never taken the slightest interest in the corporation before. Just to throw his weight around, the new Kyne on the block decides to create a highly desirable new position, executive director, the promotion going to whomever among three department heads is able to crack the murder story first. This trio consists of wire-service honcho Mark Loving (George Sanders), a self-satisfied ladies man, newspaper editor Jon Day Griffith (Thomas Mitchell), a veteran workaholic eager for a late-career break, and photo-department chief Harry Kritzer (James Cagney), who, unbeknownst to Kyne, is fooling around on the side with his leggy wife, Dorothy (Rhonda Fleming).

Watching from the sidelines is TV reporter Edward Mobley, who wants no part in this contest but is dedicated enough to work with police lieutenant Burt Kaufman (Howard Duff) in getting the murder case solved. Also thrown into the mix is "woman's reporter" (it is the fifties, after all) Mildred Donner (Ida Lupino, who, in a very enjoyable performance, shares no scenes with then-husband Duff), a communist who is not above throwing herself into Mobley's arms at the request of her own lover, Loving, to get a jump on the news.

Fidgeting on the sidelines is Robert Manners (John Barrymore, Jr.) the jittery mama's boy responsible for the crime. Barrymore (son of the Great Profile and dad to Drew), whose checkered career must certainly be credited to his inherited name, gives a fairly atrocious performance. When Manners is taunted on the television by Mobley because "The love you should have towards your mother has been twisted into hatred for her and all of her sex," Barrymore responds with some silly eye rolling and none-too-subtle sneering worthy of a silent serial villain.

PAGE 62: Gene Tierney plots to terminate an unwanted pregnancy in *LEAVE HER TO HEAVEN* (1945), covered in *Scarlet Street* #34. PAGE 63: Bette Davis and Joan Crawford teamed for the only time for a Hollywood Gothic horror with notish flourishes: *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* (1962). RIGHT: Philip Marlowe and Vivian Sterndale (Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall) are held at bay by Joe Brody (Louis Jean Heydt) in *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946), while Agnes (Sonia Darrin) watches apprehensively. BELOW: Preacher Harry Palmer (Robert Mitchum) wrestles with hate in *NIGHT OF THE HUNTER* (1955), review on page 29 PAGE 65 LEFT: Jacqueline Gibson (Jean Brooks) might not become *THE SEVENTH VICTIM* (1943) if sister Mary (Kim Hunter) and friends Dr. Louis Judd (Tom Conway), Gregory Ward (Hugh Beaumont), and Jason Hoag (Erford Gage). PAGE 65 RIGHT: The luminous poison in that test tube is also in the bloodstream of Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brien, who will soon be D.O.A. (1950).

til reluctant witnesses finally agree to provide damning testimony against Troy and his unsavory cohorts. A transitory peace is thus restored to the city of the angels.

The hallmarks of Webb's *mise en scène* can be traced to this production. The plot unfolds conversationally through a procession of closeups and medium shots—even a bloody fist fight is staged in this manner. The supporting cast ape Webb's trademark staccato dialogue readings, punctuated with periodic head nodding. Despite the deadpan ambience, the director's work was certainly that of a true auteur. His singular vision of drama remains instantly identifiable, regardless of medium.

Webb's matter-of-fact enactment of Joe Friday is always entertaining in its sanctimony. The policeman instantly quotes LA county statistics in the manner of a preacher who touts out scripture to justify every moral lesson he wishes to



impart. Webb's dogged belief in Friday's persona renders the two of them virtually inseparable; audiences either love him or hate him. Ben Alexander, in the role of colleague Frank Smith, is far less pronounced and seems dull by comparison (even though his physical appearance is reminiscent of the real-life male impersonating jazz-trumpeter Billy Tipton). His character briefly comes to life when Smith instructs undercover officer Downey regarding the style of women's clothing she should select to appropriately blend in with the denizens of The Red Spot. Other than that moment of animation, Alexander serves as a straight man for Webb's blunderbuss bursts of moralistic speechifying.

DRAGNET, though photographed in color, presents the director's black-and-white concept of the world. There isn't room in his thinking for the permeating shades of gray that distinguish the best efforts of the *noir* genre. The film is simply a police procedural in which the brass apprehend the guilty and vindicate the innocent. Friday does pause to ponder one question—"Why does the law always work for the guilty?"—but his own answer is merely a self-righteous one. Irony, a critical ingredient of most *noirs*, doesn't exist in Webb's universe. The real history of the LAPD, extending into this new millennium with allegations of internal corruption, is far removed from Webb's jingoistic whitewashing. He may have been content with "just the facts" as he saw them, but posterity doesn't support his message

—John F. Black

BLUE VELVET (1986)

David Lynch wrote and directed BLUE VELVET in lush color for Dino DeLaurentis. The surrealistic nightmare begins when Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) returns from school to his sleepy home town of Lumberton. The small town seems idealized, reality as filtered through early television, adrift in time between the fifties and the eighties. Strolling aimlessly in an overgrown, vacant area, Jeffrey finds a severed human ear lying on the ground. He takes it to a family friend, Detective Williams (George Dickerson), then goes sleuthing with the detective's virginal daughter, Sandy (Laura Dern). In their naive inquisitiveness, these two sweet, smart puppies have no idea what they're getting themselves into, yet they both give an impression of inner strength, and Jeffrey's weird sense of humor hints that he's adaptable, a survivor.

Jeffrey snoops through the apartment of lounge singer Dorothy Vallens. Isabella Rossellini plays this role to perfection, unafraid to sing out of tune and reveal her normal-looking body, with more sags and jiggles than most directors prefer on their leading ladies (Look for composer Angelo Badalamenti, as Andy Badale, in a cameo as her pianist at the Slow Club.) Jeffrey hides in Dorothy's closet when she comes home





unexpectedly. Vacillating between guilt, fear, and fascination, he spies as Dorothy undresses. She catches him, threatens to kill him, nicks his face with a huge knife, strips him naked, then sends him back to the closet when her tormenter, small-time mobster Frank Booth (Dennis Hopper), arrives. Frank's got a fetish for blue velvet and he's holding Dorothy's husband and small son as hostages. In the role of this foulmouthed sadist, drug addict, kidnapper, and murderer, Dennis Hopper turns in a stunningly convincing performance. (Recovering drug addict and alcoholic Hopper told Lynch he wanted the role because, "I am Frank.") Jeffrey peeps, horrified and disgusted, but also aroused, as Dorothy grovels in sexual slavery.

Each small decision draws Jeffrey further into this case. To his astonishment, he's soon rolling around in the embrace of the masochistic, mentally disturbed, and much older Dorothy. Her description of sexual intercourse is, "He put his disease in me." It's the disease of the soul, the poisoned fruit of knowledge: good and evil, pleasure and pain. "Hit me," she moans. She spreads the corruption to Jeffrey. When Sandy finds out, she takes some of the taint into herself. The price of solving the mysteries, punishing the guilty, and growing up is loss of innocence.

Throughout, Lynch uses a figurative vocabulary (consciously, the dialogue spells out many of these symbols), including songs, body parts, hoses, flowers, robins, and bugs, to tell a metaphorical story that parallels the literal one. The ear, for instance, serves as an occult labyrinth for the spiritual journey into secrets. The quest ends in knowledge, understanding, represented by the eye. Lynch uses sun and moon, light and dark, and various colors to mean approximately what they mean in the Tarot and related magic. He also makes many references to legends, books, and movies.

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LEFT: Emma Newton (Patricia Collinge) beams as her brother Charlie (Joseph Cotten) embraces her daughter Charlie (Teresa Wright) in Alfred Hitchcock's *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* (1943). RIGHT: In 1967, Ol' Blue Eyes himself, Frank Sinatra, starred as **TONY ROME** opposite Jill St. John.

What's worse, this killer reads comic books! Supposedly this movie, based on a 1953 novel by Charles Epstein entitled *The Bloody Spur* (a phrase that never shows up in the film), was producer Bert Friedlob's contribution to the mid fifties controversy surrounding the dangerous effects of comic books on impressionable young minds. However, this seems to have less effect on poor Manners' psyche than a childhood incident in which he'd been compared to a girl when a neighbor spotted him dusting the house with his mother. It's doubtful that many viewers gave up their comic books as a result of this film, but there's a good chance that many sensitive young single men thought twice before they picked up a dust cloth!

—Barry Monush

SHADOW OF A DOUBT (1943)

With *SHADOW OF A DOUBT*, film noir invades the picture perfect suburban life of the forties. Alfred Hitchcock knew that detail was vital to the telling of the story of the Merry Widow Murderer visiting his sister and her family while the heat from police dies down. He was fortunate enough to gain the participation of Thornton Wilder, one of the few celebrated writers willing to work in a genre that others often snubbed. Wilder's moving play *OUR TOWN* impressed Hitchcock while he was in England, and its classic All-American characterizations were precisely the type Hitch needed to reinforce the reality of the characters in this film. Also lending a touch of Americana to the enterprise was Sally Benson, author of *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1942), the basis for the classic Vincente Minnelli musical of 1944.

Even though *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* is set in a crisp and clean suburb, Hitchcock brings the grit and darkness of urban *noir* to the picture in the concentrated form of Uncle Charlie Oakley (Joseph Cotten). The opening sequence of Uncle Charlie on the lam in Philadelphia are tinged with decay: the picturesque docks are populated with bums in patched coats; the great city in the background is overpowering by the filthy dump close at hand. The train carrying Uncle Charlie to Santa Rosa emits an evil cloud of black smoke that envelops the station. (Said Hitchcock: "It's one of those ideas for which you go to a lot of trouble, although it's seldom noticed.")

Waiting for the killer at the station is his niece and namesake, Charlie Newton (Teresa Wright). She is his double, his alter-ego. Hitchcock punctuates this connection as frequently as possible, both visually and within the plot: both characters are introduced in the same way (lying on a bed in a mirror image of each other). Charlie feels that her family is sick (lying in bed, she complains to her father, "We eat, we sleep, and that's about all. We don't really



have any conversations. We just talk") and Uncle Charlie feels that society is sick (during one of his chilling outbursts, he tells his niece, "Do you know the world is a foul sty? Do you know if you ripped the fronts off houses you'd find swine?"). Charlie is innocence and Uncle Charlie is a calculating murderer. In fact, as pointed out by Francois Truffaut, *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* is filled with doubles. Everyone and everything has its opposite number, from the dim father and his crime obsessed friend to another murder suspect on the opposite side of the country.

Uncle Charlie is welcomed home as the prodigal son—or rather, brother—by Emma Newton (Patricia Collinge), her husband, Joseph (Henry Travers), and their children, Charlie and Ann (Edna Mae Wonacott). Charlie is in awe and tells her uncle that they're twins who share a secret link. It's this link that compels Uncle Charlie to inflict his warped view of life on his innocent niece. The arrival of two undercover detectives posing as reporters (Macdonald Carey and Wallace Ford) triggers odd behavior in Uncle Charlie and suspicions in his niece. Once it's clear that Charlie knows too much, Uncle Charlie sets out to eliminate her.

In the huge pantheon of outstanding films Hitchcock directed, *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* tends to be overlooked, but take the word of the Master—this endlessly fascinating film was the director's own favorite of his entire career.

—Jeff Allen

D. O. A. (1950)

This classic *noir*, directed by Rudolph Mate, for United Artists, opens with Frank Bigelow (Edmond O'Brien) walking into the Homicide Division of the Los Angeles Police to report a murder. Who was murdered? After a long, tense pause, Bigelow says, "I was."

Clarence Greene and Russell Rouse wrote the melodramatic but gripping screenplay, based on Robert Siodmak's expressionist movie, *DER MANN, DER SEINEN MORDER SUCHT* (1931). Mate made more than 50 movies as a cameraman (including Theodore Dreyer's *THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC* in 1928 and *VAMPYR* in 1932) before he began directing. He knew the look he wanted from cinematographer Ernest Laszlo, who used high contrast (often single source) lighting for this black-and-white film. Laszlo's long shots in deep focus make the scurrying humans look small, lost in indifferent environments such as warrens of city streets and an abandoned warehouse.

Most of the movie is an extended flashback, tracing Bigelow's route to the police. An accountant and notary public in Banning, California, he tells his secretary and girlfriend, Paula Gibson (Pamela Britton), that he needs a vacation—from her. She's pressuring him to get married. (Dur-

ing a troubled conversation in a local bar, she swaps her full glass for his empty one while he's on the phone.) Bigelow escapes to San Francisco, where a wolf whistle on the soundtrack burlesques his lechery as he ogles the women. Conventioners staying at the St. Francis Hotel invite him nightclubbing. In *The Fisherman*, a smoke-filled bebop dive on the waterfront, a shadowy figure again switches Bigelow's glass.

Bigelow's decision to spurn the too-willing dames, go to bed alone, and make a commitment to Paula would begin the happy ending in most movies, but *D. O. A.* is just getting started. Next morning, Bigelow wakes up sick. A doctor tells him, "You've been murdered." Since his body has already absorbed the slow-acting, luminous poison, Bigelow has only days, maybe hours, to live.

At first, he panics and runs aimlessly through San Francisco. The oblivion of ordinary people (filmed among real passersby, with only a few paid extras) symbolizes how little Bigelow's fate matters to the world. Throughout, Dimitri Tiomkin's fine musical score comments on the action or mocks it. In this scene, wall-crawling music changes to a march as the victim stops, calms himself, and decides to hunt down his killer.

Bigelow learns that he became a target by innocently notarizing a bill of sale that later became crucial evidence about stolen iridium. No competition for Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Bigelow interrogates suspects by bellowing accusations and threats, with barely a pause to listen. Increasingly violent in his desperation, he degenerates from respectability to near-depravity as he grills Mrs. Phillips (Lynn Baggett), widow of the iridium buyer (dead by either suicide or murder); her husband's business partner, Halliday (William Ching); her brother-in-law, Stanley Phillips (Henry Hart), Halliday's secretary, Miss Foster (Beverly Garland, then Beverly Campbell), sinister lovely Marla Rakubian (Laurette Luez), and others involved with mobster Majak (Luther Adler) and his sidekicks, including Chester, a demented sadist (made memorable by Neville Brand).

Bigelow can't even solve the crime by himself, much less save himself. One of his suspects discovers, then correctly interprets, the key evidence. However, Bigelow's manic persistence goads the evildoers into the mistakes that lead to their downfall. Also, he probably saves a life, when he spots another poisoning and warns the victim to seek medical help before it's too late. Despite the seemingly existential plot, Bigelow's last hours aren't as pointless as some critics judge them.

—Leila Loban

TONY ROME (1967)

Obliged to fulfill a three-picture deal with 20th Century Fox, Frank Sinatra, still among the top showbiz attractions in the late sixties, went looking for a suitable property and found one that fit him like a glove: a martini-smooth glimpse of the underbelly of sun-baked Miami, based on Marvin H. Albert's novel *Miami Mayhem* (1960). Wisely, this generic title was dropped in favor of naming the movie after its hard-boiled protagonist, and *TONY ROME* was born. Something about the star's oft mentioned Italian heritage made this character's name just too good to be true, and

the film, a polished *noirish* drama and solid box office hit, wound up being one of Sinatra's best-known latter-day movies. That Sinatra had never played a cinematic shamus prior to this film is amazing, considering just how perfect he is for this genre.

Richard Breen's script follows Albert's lean and highly readable novel with extreme fidelity. Rome, a disillusioned cop-turned-private detective, reluctantly interrupts his preferred routine of sailing the cruiser he won in a crap game in order to earn a spot of cash. His former partner, Ralph Turpin (Robert J. Wilke), now a house dick at a motel described most colorfully as a "hot pillow shop," needs Rome to return drunken Diana Pines (Sue Lyon), found at the motel, to her millionaire dad (Richard Krieger), without the police learning where she was found. Rome carts her back to her swank estate, seemingly bringing this minor incident to an end. However, once back at his beloved boat, he is confronted by a pair of goons (Lloyd Gough and Babe Hart) looking for a diamond pin. Rome is chloroformed and his cruiser ransacked, after which Diana also shows up wanting the pin.

If this isn't proof enough that there's something explosive about this piece of jewelry, no sooner has Tony accused Turpin of stealing the pin, then the latter's corpse is found paying host to a bullet in Rome's office. Eager to get to the bottom of this mess, Rome embarks on a crooked trail that takes him from one shady character to the next, a journey through a sixties Miami that's more a playground of naughty folks than the seriously crime-plagued city it became in later years.

Not unexpectedly, it isn't so much the plot as the array of two-bit thugs, shapely babes, and wanton misfits whom Tony encounters that give the film its kick. Among those on hand are the always-dependable Richard Conte as Rome's police liaison, Santini, who begrudgingly admires Rome's style; Simon Oakland as millionaire Rudolph Kosterman, who's proudly worked his way up from the lower depths but hasn't

left his edge behind; Gena Rowlands as Oakland's loving but nervous second wife, Rita; comedian Sheeky Greene as a hitman with a pronounced limp (he's called Catleg); Rocky Graziano as former boxer turned necktie salesman Packy; and Joan Shawlee as an over-the-hill whore named Fat Candy. Bantering very nicely with Sinatra is Jill St. John as Ann, a wealthy party-hopper waiting out a divorce and unapologetically looking for some action. Called a slut, she shrugs it off, telling Rome, "That's just my nickname, only my dearest friends use it."

Considerably on the downside, Lyon, so memorable as the nymphet *LOLITA* (1962), is a fairly blank presence as the troubled Diana, whose night of drunken revelry starts the plot rolling. A comic aside involving a lady and her cat (not in the book), leading to a string of groan-inducing pussy jokes, is disposable. Equally awkward is a sequence involving a stripper (Deanna Lund) and her blowsy lesbian lover (Elizabeth Fraser) ("Lose a few pounds and shut up!") Played for maximum effect, lest the dimmer audience members not get the Sapphic relationship, the scene has a shrill, overdone quality not evident in the rest of the movie and isn't helped by Rome's rather condescending reaction to the whole thing.



SOME LIKE IT HOT (1959)



LEFT: Three Roberts—Ryan, Mitchum, and Young—headed the cast of *CROSSFIRE* (1947), which turned a blistering, *noirish* spotlight on bigotry. RIGHT: John Garfield and Lana Turner burned up the screen as lovers plotting to bump off her husband (Cecil Kellaway) in *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE* (1946), a rare excursion for MGM into *noir* country. The suspicious district attorney is Leon Ames.

Under the serviceable direction of Gordon Douglas (in the second of four Sinatra collaborations), *TONY ROME* is all Sinatra's show and he is more than up to the challenge, appearing in every scene. (He would reprise Rome for the less-satisfying 1968 sequel *LADY IN CEMENT*.) His world-weary squint, cynical yet fair and honest approach, and snappy comebacks indicating he's nobody's fool, make this a terrific role for Sinatra, whose thespian abilities were often overshadowed by his towering musical talents.

Just to keep it in the family, daughter Nancy sings the pow title number, written by Lee Hazelwood, a jaunty tune informing us that "Pussycats that run astray—he will bring them back today." With that kind of lyricism, who can argue that the sixties were unbeatable when it came to grabbing your attention with an opening tune?

—Barry Monush

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? (1962)

Robert Aldrich produced and directed this black-and-white classic for Seven Arts (distributed by Warner Bros.). For her mind-boggling performance as Baby Jane Hudson, former child star turned hag, Bette Davis received an Oscar nomination. Davis designed and applied her own unforgettably hideous makeup, with the idea that Jane smeared layer upon layer without washing her face. Joan Crawford co-stars in a role almost equally powerful, as Jane's sister, Blanche Hudson, a paraplegic. More Oscar nominations went to Victor Buono (Best Supporting Actor), Norma Koch (Best Costume Design), Ernest Haller (Best Cinematography), and Joseph Kelly (Best Sound). Lukas Heller based his screenplay on the 1962 novel, *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, by Henry Farrell.

As a child (played by Gina Gillespie), the plainer, more serious Blanche lived, seething with resentment, in the shadow of nauseatingly cute little Jane (Julie Allred). Show biz parents (Dave Willock and Anne Barton) spoiled Jane rotten while exploiting her as the breadwinner. Later, Blanche came into her own, as an adult star of romantic movies. She overshadowed Jane, whose acting career ended early, in part due to her worsening alcoholism.

Now Blanche and Jane, both in their fifties, live alone together in Blanche's decaying home. Blanche's money and Jane's guilt bind the women. Blanche's career ended years ago, with the car accident that paralyzed her legs. The camera shows just enough of this accident to nudge viewers into believing the official version: that Jane, driving drunk, rammed the car into Blanche, who was opening the gate for her. However, the fact that the camera never shows the



women's faces during the accident hints of some deep secret buried in this story. (Cleverly, it's left to the audience to assume that they're not shown due to the impossibility of the stars looking as if they're in their mid-twenties.) Jane now depends on Blanche's money, while Blanche, living on the second floor of a house that's a nightmare of wheelchair accessibility, depends on Jane for food and basic care.

Jane, still drinking, deteriorates from eccentric to psychotic. She kills her sister's parakeet and serves it on a pretty plate beneath a silver cover. Another meal features a dead rat. Jane yanks Blanche's telephone cord out of the wall, then gets rid of the worried, sensible housekeeper, Elvira (Maidie Norman). Her entrapment complete, Blanche realizes that her angry, crazy sister might even murder her.

Enter pianist Edwin Flagg (Victor Buono), whom Jane hires as her accompanist in a loony attempt to revive her stage career. Her voice is an off-key ruin. Poor Edwin, longing for dignity and bullied by his mama (Marjorie Bennett), so desperately needs money that he dutifully plinks the piano. Dressed as a grotesque, adult-sized version of the Baby Jane dolls hawked in theater lobbies after her childhood performances, Jane bleats a maudlin ditty, her signature tune as a child star: "I've Written A Letter to Daddy," by B. D. Merrill. Edwin (probably gay) hides his horrified loathing, even when she develops a crush on him.

Blanche, upstairs, urgently needs Edwin's attention for a different reason. She's tried to maintain dignity and former glamor, but it's hard to keep up appearances once Jane gags her and trusses her by the wrists to a ceiling strap, as if she were a deer on a butcher's hook.

Davis and Crawford worked together only this once. Though their genuine mutual dislike (fueled by studio and media gossip) may have enhanced the energy and passion of these performances, such speculation shouldn't belittle the considerable skill that brings these characters to life. This is a must-see movie.

—Lelia Loban

CROSSFIRE (1947)

CROSSFIRE was conceived as a social comment film exposing the ruthless irrationality of anti-Semitism, but offering its message through a detective story, the better to attract filmgoers who didn't attend movies for uplift. As a result, it emphasizes anti-Semitism as the motive for an otherwise inexplicable murder, so the more everyday forms of bias are only referred to in the dialogue (When the 1945 novel *The Brick Foxhole*, by future screenwriter/director Richard

Brooks, was adapted for this film, the victim was changed from a homosexual to a Jew. Interestingly, when Arthur Laurents' play *HOME OF THE BRAVE* was filmed in 1949, its bias victim was changed from a Jew to a black. This interchangeability of hated outsiders makes at least as strong a social point as any of the individual films involved.)

In addition, *CROSSFIRE*'s producer/director/writer team of Adrian Scott, Edward Dmytryk, and John Paxton—who previously made *MURDER MY SWEET* (1944) and *CORNERED* (1945)—followed the novel's lead and broadened *CROSSFIRE*'s subject by linking prejudice with a more general post-World War II mood of unattached hatred and latent violence. As the future victim describes it, "We're too used to fighting but we just don't know what to fight. You can feel the tension in the air . . . hate that doesn't know where to go."

In fact, you can almost see the tension in the air, thanks to the film's neo-expressionist visual style that derives from *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* (1919) by way of *CITIZEN KANE* (1941). *CROSSFIRE*'s sets may aim for realism, but its lighting places the characters in a nighttime world of hyperbolic shadows, huddling for security around a lamp while something frightful hovers unseen in the surrounding darkness. These images embody the psychological and emotional disorientation of a story in which a soldier, mistakenly suspected of murder, asks, "Has everything suddenly gone crazy? Or is it just me?" He isn't even sure of his own innocence and wonders, "I couldn't have killed that guy, could I?" His friend explains, "The snakes are loose. Everybody's got 'em."

The film's internal, psychological approach also affects its plot structure, which makes use of flashbacks that represent a character's version of events, not an objective statement of fact (a format and an attitude that also derive from *CALIGARI* via *KANE*). *CROSSFIRE* may not have many flashbacks, but it uses them with skill and subtlety. Note, especially, the variations—in visuals and in acting—between two men's versions of a scene in a bar.

The film is at its most profoundly disturbing in one of these flashbacks. Mitch, the young soldier, awakens in an unfamiliar apartment, uncertain how he got there. Groggy from lack of sleep and from alcohol, he answers the door and a man enters who seems to know his way around. This man says something and Mitch nods, whereupon the man reveals he has lied. Then he offers a new statement that Mitch accepts, and again he declares he has lied. Throughout the scene, nothing this stranger says can be taken as truth, although it may sound convincing, so Mitch hovers helplessly, with nothing certain to grasp hold of and no solid ground on which to stand. At the end of *CROSSFIRE*, the actual murderer is exposed and the clear-cut menace he represents is destroyed, but the pathological liar without an identity continues to exist in this shadowy, ominous nightworld.

The year that *CROSSFIRE* opened, the House un-American Activities Committee began to investigate Communist infiltration of Hollywood. This film's producer and director were among the Hollywood Ten, witnesses who refused to answer questions. They were charged with contempt of Congress and served time in prison. If the

makers of *CROSSFIRE* could get into trouble, it is little wonder that others quickly avoided social issues. But this film's mood and visual style remained available for use, a safe but vivid expression of continued moral and psychological unease.

—Paul M. Jensen

THE SEVENTH VICTIM (1943)

"I runne to death and death meets me as fast, and all my pleasures are like yesterday" Holy Sonnet VII. John Donne."

So opens Mark Robson's first directorial outing for producer Val Lewton, *THE SEVENTH VICTIM*. The director, who previously was Lewton's editor for such films as *CAT PEOPLE* (1942) and *THE LEOPARD MAN* (1943) and would go on to helm *ISLE OF THE DEAD* (1945) and *BEDLAM* (1946) filled his filmic world with doomed characters inhabiting a menacing and dark city. Robson skillfully blends many of the horror elements already established in the Lewton canon with *noir* characters and situations.

Mary Gibson (PLANET OF THE APES series star Kim Hunter, in her first role) learns that her sister, Jacqueline (Jean Brooks), has vanished, and leaves the confines of school to search for her in New York. Once in the big city, Mary learns that Jacqueline has sold her successful cosmetics company, married lawyer Gregory Ward (Hugh Beaumont) and deserted him, and rented a room above Dante's Restaurant, a room housing only a chair and a hangman's noose. With the help of doomed private investigator Irving August (Lou Lubin), poet Jason Hoag (Erford Gage), and Jacqueline's lover/psychiatrist Dr. Louis Judd (Tom Conway, playing the character he played in *CAT PEOPLE*, though Judd died in that picture), Mary learns that her sister has joined a cult of devil worshipping Palladists. Furthermore, Jacqueline has broken their law of secrecy by confiding in her lover and therefore must die. However, the Palladists have a contradictory



DRAGNET (1954)

law of nonviolence, and are therefore attempting to drive Jacqueline to suicide.

THE SEVENTH VICTIM is chock full of tragic *noir* characters. Before leaving to search for her sister, Mary is offered a teaching job at her school. She is warned against this by Miss Gilchrist (Eve March), a teacher seemingly in an unhappy relationship with headmistress Miss Lowood (Ottola Nesmith): "I left as you are leaving, but I didn't have courage. One must have courage to really live in the world. I came back." In New York, Mary accepts a position as an elementary school teacher, never really leaving the safety of school. Dr. Judd no longer practices psychiatry because a former patient went insane, and poet Hoag hasn't written in 10 years because his muse (who turns out to be Dr. Judd's insane ex-patient) vanished. The Palladists are all pathetic creatures clinging to their religion only because it offers something to cling to in their barren lives. Perhaps the most doom-laden of all the film's characters (Jacqueline excepted) is Mimi (Elizabeth Russell), slowly dying but going out on the town for one final stab at life.

In several scenes, Robson turns the citizens of New York into obstacles for our heroines. In one instance, Mary sees the body of Irving August being carried onto a sub-



While The City Sleeps

way train by two p'atists. When she tries to find help, she's ignored. Likewise, when a switchblade-wielding killer is stalking Jacqueline, her frantic pleas are disregarded by the numerous passersby. Even when she finally stumbles on to a theater troupe exiting from a performance, her cries for help are answered with a glib "I'll help you to a beer and a sandwich." (Earlier in this scene, Robson throws in a tip of the hat to CAT PEOPLE's acclaimed "bus" scene.) Walking down the street from pool to pool of safe street-lamp light, Jacqueline keeps glancing back until a very loud crash—of a dog knocking over a garbage can lid—breaks the tension. Soon after, of course, the assassin emerges from a darkened doorway, almost as though created by the very darkness.)

THE SEVENTH VICTIM is a compelling blend of horror and *film noir*, dramatized in a manner that is distinctly Val Lewton. (Such VICTIM locations as Perry Street and the Jerry Lane Theatre are culled from Lewton's own years in New York's Greenwich Village.) In another tense scene, the *box office* Mrs. Gedl (Mary Newton) warns Mary to stop searching for her sister. It's a simple scene, the sort usually played with one character holding a gun on the other, here no nude and vulnerable girl's taking a shower, and it's increased by nothing more than her antagonist's sly smile and her sister's shade w/ on the shower curtain. *AS YOU CAN SEE* (1946) proved some 17 years later, sometimes that's all you need.

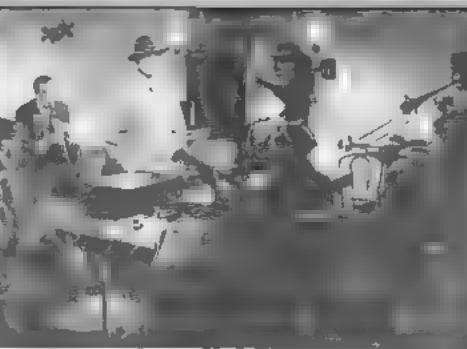
—Jeff Allen

SONG OF THE THIN MAN (1947)

Directed by Edward Buzzell, *SONG OF THE THIN MAN* is the sixth and last of the popular series that MGM began with *THE THIN MAN* in 1934. Unlike its predecessors, and despite its abundance of sophisticated comedy, *SONG* is a true *film noir*. It's the most faithful of all the *Thin Man* movies to the moodiness of Dashiell Hammett's original concept (his 1930 novel *The Thin Man*), though Steve Fisher and Harry Crane didn't base their script directly on any Hammett plot. William Powell and Myrna Loy reprise their starring roles as amateur sleuths Nick and Nora Charles. Eleven-year-old Dean Stockwell shows early acting talent as their son, Nick, Jr.

David Snell wrote the energetic jazz and swing score. This movie would be worth watching just for the music, in fact. Unfortunately, the identity of the real musicians on the separately-recorded soundtrack seems lost.

The movie opens as Nick and Nora attend a swank charity bash on the S. S. Fortune, a party yacht where the guests drink, gamble, and dance to swing. The band's first clarinetist, Buddy "Reedman" Hollis (Don Taylor), drunkenly muffs his solo, then quarrels with the conductor, Tommy Drake (Philip Reed) over a svelte blonde chanteuse,



Fran Page (Gloria Grahame). Fran dated and dumped them both, but her true feelings show through when she croons the song Hollis wrote for her, "You're Not So Easy to Forget" (written for the movie by Herb Magidson and Ben Oakland). When Hollis brandishes his clarinet threateningly, Drake punches him out in front of the startled guests and replaces him with second clarinetist Clarence "Clinker" Krause (Keenan Wynn).

Drake, a womanizer and gambler, owes \$12,000 to mobster Al "Charm Boy" Ambro (William Bushop), who's been threatening him for the money. Drake tries to beg a loan from wealthy David Thayar (Ralph Morgan) and his attractive wife, Jessica (Bess Flowers). Later in the evening, someone shoots Drake dead. Buddy Hollis disappears. The Thayars' daughter, Janet (Jayne Meadows), elopes with the party's host, Phil Brant (Bruce Cowling), a self-made man the hoity-toity Thayars consider beneath them. Though there's plenty of motive to go around, the cops arrest Brant for the murder.

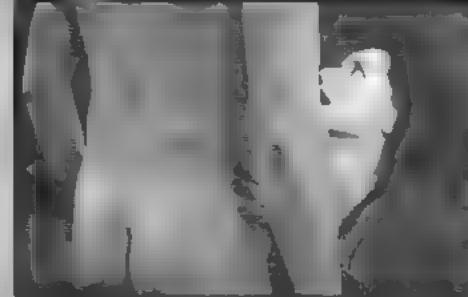
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I brought upstate New York and Manhattan glittering by night, cameraman Charles Rosher follows sleuths and shady characters through trains, boats, sad dives, ritzy DeCo hotels, and a private sanitarium. Even the most sympathetic characters reveal complicated, unsaintly personalities. For instance, Clinker Krause, with his German name, calls a clarinet a "Jew flute," two years after Hitler's death. Even Nick and Nora show a callous side, blithely dumping their child with the maid right after night, while they go partying and detecting until dawn. But never fear. Nick and Nora finally sort out the truth about the murder and also revise their parental priorities, with help from Clinker and, of course, plucky pup Aska.

—Leila Loban

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Just what is this thing called *SOME LIKE IT HOT*—a racy sex farce, a slickly integrated musical, or a *noir*esque, sometimes graphically violent gangster flick? The answer is, of course, all three, but primarily it is simply one of the best and most original films to come out of the "New" Hollywood of the late fifties. *HOT* was a key moment in that transitional period when the old studio system finally gave up the ghost, and some of its sharpest, most canny practitioners (such as director Billy Wilder) went independent,



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PAGE 70 LEFT: Noir veteran Dana Andrews (pictured with Thomas Mitchell) headed an all-star cast in Fritz Lang's *WHITE THE CITY SLEEPS* (1956). PAGE 70 RIGHT: Temporarily ditching Aska (see BELOW), Nick Charles entered a noirish world to sing the *SONG OF THE THIN MAN* (1947), the last film in the classic mystery series. LEFT: Kyle MacLachlan is forced to strip for femme fatale Isabella Rossellini in David Lynch's *BLUE VELVET* (1986).

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Continued on page 78

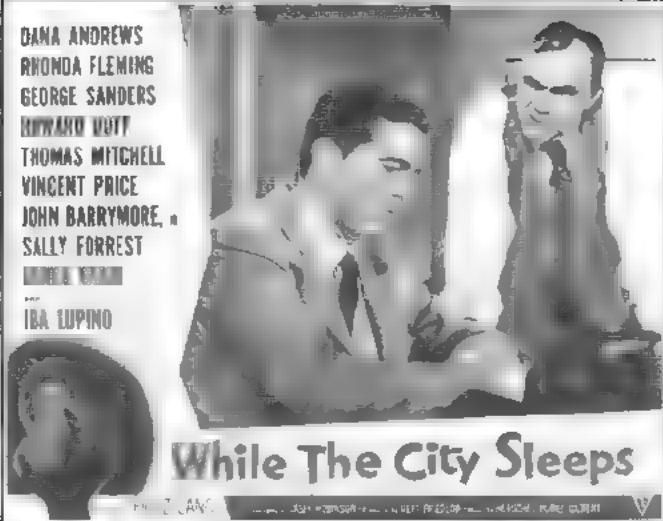


With the death of the Hollywood studio system also came the demise of the Hollywood production code, which had kept a tight reign on "moral" standards in films since the thirties. Suddenly, what was permitted content-wise was radically expanded, and *HOT* bears witness to this new permissiveness towards both sex and violence. At first, the unavoidable gay suggestiveness of Curtis and Lemmon in high drag is kept in check by the avidly expressed heterosexual impulses of both, notably when finding themselves in intimate proximity with the girls in the band on their first night aboard train. Soon, however, sexual boundaries blur and Jerry as Daphne finds himself enjoying the attentions of an elderly playboy, Osgood Fielding III (Joe E. Brown)—a situation which, however amusing, would have been unthinkable under the old Hollywood code of a few years earlier!

Likewise, the film pushed the envelope of permissible onscreen violence. Commencing as a brilliantly scripted comedy, *HOT* abruptly (but seamlessly) shifts gears when Joe and Jerry witness the gangland killings. After the unflinchingly staged massacre itself, gang leader Spats Colombo (veteran tough guy George Raft) grabs a machine gun and maniacally finishes off the main stool pigeon, Toothpick Charlie (George E. Stone), who, only wounded, is seen grasping for the telephone from the pile of bodies. Even considered in the wake of the escalating violence of sixties and seventies Hollywood, Wilder's staging of the Valentine's massacre remains surprisingly powerful.

Innovative in so many ways, *HOT* was also one of the first Hollywood films to create a really authentic sense of period, the alternatively luminous and *noir*esque black-and-white cinematography of Charles Lang melding with Ted Haworth's flawless art direction to create an atmospheric vision of the twenties that is both glamorous and (in the opening Chicago sequences) realistically grungy. While the trio of star leads is perfection, choice bits from Raft, Pat O'Brien (as Mulligan the cop), Nehemiah Persoff (as Bonaparte the godfather), Joan Shawlee (as Sweet Sue), and Mike Mazurk (as—what else?—a henchman) add to the overall妙处.

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appropriating the best aspects of the old regime under their own new and personalized creative control, and tossing out decades of antiquated taboos along the way.

Wilder was a master of many genres (including such classic *noir* as 1944's *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*), and he fused them all in *SOME LIKE IT HOT*. When two struggling jazz musicians inadvertently witness the St. Valentine's Day massacre in the Chicago of the Roaring Twenties, they disguise themselves as female musicians to avoid the wrath of the killers. Joining an all-girl band, Joe/Josephine and Jerry/Daphne (Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon) board a train to Florida in the company of Sweet Sue and her Society Syncopaters (including the band's lead singer, Sugar Kowalczyk, played by a voluptuously ample Marilyn Monroe).

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BOOK ENDS

The Scarlet Street Review of Books

SINISTER SERIALS

Leonard J. Kohl
Midnight Marquee Press, 2000
256 pages—\$20

Perhaps no form of cinema is more disdained than the lowly chapter play. Often decried as juvenile (which it frequently was), cheap (which it almost always was), and likened more to the comic book than to film, the serial is largely brushed aside as nothing more than an aberrant footnote in film history. What little has been written on the subject has tended more toward fannish nostalgia than in-depth analysis of the form. As such, Leonard J. Kohl's *Sinister Serials of Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, and Lon Chaney, Jr.* takes on unusual importance in that it is virtually the first serious study of serials—and thankfully, it's seriousness without ever being ponderous.

Kohl's choice of the serials of Messrs. Karloff, Lugosi, and Chaney for his subject is an inspired one, since it effectively reduces the sprawling history to a tractable level, while encompassing three decades—the three key decades—of serials. Interestingly, the only one of these actors who might be said to be a serial star is Lugosi. Karloff's serials (the total number of which is open to question) come early in his career and were never built around him. Chaney's crop up early in his career (including 1932's *THE LAST FRONTIER*, made when the actor billed himself as Creighton Chaney) and continue through the peak of his popularity with his other starring serial, *OVERLAND MAIL* (1943). Lugosi's serials, on the other hand, are, with the exception of *S.O.S. COASTGUARD* (1937), actually built around the actor. To that degree, he qualifies as a bona fide serial star, though it's unlikely Lugosi would be all that de-

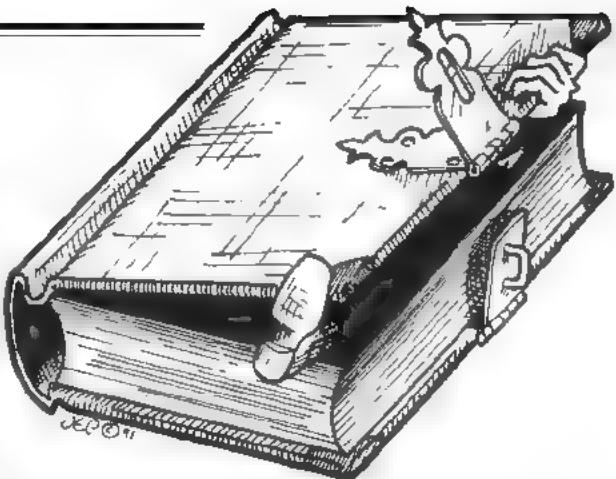
lighted with the tag. Lugosi's serials tend to come at reasonably high points in his career, but seem to have been foisted on him by his own inherently awful career sense and the truly miserable contract Universal had with him. Even so, Lugosi's serials have been given almost as short shrift as those of Karloff and Chaney. As such, the book plugs a significant gap in the scholarship on these horror icons' careers, along with shedding much new light on the serial as an overlooked branch of filmmaking.

The book is intelligently laid out, starting with an overview of the serial form and the stars on which the book focuses (Kohl makes a fascinating and persuasive comparison of Lugosi and Karloff to Laurel and Hardy, suggesting that Lugosi was the more intense Laurelesque character and Karloff the more laid back Hardy-like one, resulting in a complementing of styles.) The Karloff section is in many ways the most detailed, which is as it should be, since Karloff's serials are the least accessible of the lot. Kohl's details on *THE HOPE DIAMOND MYSTERY* (1921) are invaluable in that they reveal Karloff in a role of some stature 10 years before he became a star. The Lugosi section is admirably done, too. It's a delight to have someone write seriously about *RETURN OF CHANDU* (1934) and *SHADOW OF CHINATOWN* (1936). Kohl nails the fact that Lugosi's crazed scientist in *THE PHANTOM CREEPS* (1939) is the prototype for all his mad doctors to come, from *THE DEVIL BAT* (1941) right up through *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* (1955). Lugosi fans who deprive themselves of *THE*

Boris Karloff indulges in some early skullduggery in *THE HOPE DIAMOND MYSTERY* (1921), as Captain C. Clayton phones for help?



PHANTOM CREEPS because it's "just a serial" are missing out on a large chunk of the man's history. The concluding Chaney section offers a compelling look at this difficult-to-peg actor, gamely dealing with his numerous complexities as a human being and his strengths and shortcomings as an actor. The results are unusually insightful and blessedly sidestep the fannish defensiveness that often defeats writers struggling to come to terms with the "master character creator," as Universal billed him.



Leonard Kohl has created a compelling work that is a must read for fans of the actors in question and the serial in its various forms. The book is lavishly illustrated and strikingly designed (the cover is a pip), making it a nice addition to anyone's filmbook collection.

—Ken Hanke

JACK THE RIPPER: HIS LIFE AND CRIMES IN POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT

Gary Coville and Patrick Luciano
McFarland and Co., 1999
Box 611

Jefferson, NC 28640
193 pages

JACK THE RIPPER: THE INQUEST OF THE FINAL VICTIM

John Smithkey III
Key Publications, 1998
119 pages

JACK THE RIPPER: A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Alexander Kelly with David Sharp
Association of Assistant Librarians, 1995
186 pages

THE JACK THE RIPPER HANDBOOK

Ross Strachan
Great Scot Services, 1999
188 pages

THE TRUE FACE OF JACK THE RIPPER

Melvin Harris
Michael O'Mara Books, 1994
216 pages

PRISONER 1167: THE MADMAN WHO WAS JACK THE RIPPER

James Tully
Carroll & Graf, 1997
396 pages

THE MAN WHO HUNTED JACK THE RIPPER

Nicolas Connell and Stewart P. Evans
Rupert Books, 2000
198 pages

Jim Carrey (whom I'll refer to for the rest of the piece as JTR) is Jack the Ripper! Can Carrey account for his whereabouts during the time of the murders? Yes, he wasn't born yet, but this is my theory and mine is the only one that counts. Over the course of the next several hundred pages, I will disprove all other theories, while not for a moment convincing you that mine is any more based in fact.

That is the attitude I've developed after reading the series of books listed above back to back. The authors cannot even agree on the number of victims (as low as



A STUDY IN TERROR (1965) was the first of two clever movies pitting Sherlock Holmes against Jack the Ripper. Pictured: Michael (John Cairney), Dr. Murray (Anthony Quayle), Inspector Lestrade (Frank Finlay), Sherlock Holmes (John Neville), and Dr. Watson (Donald Houston).

four, as high as nine), never mind proving the killer's (or killers') identity (or identities). Here's a rundown:

Jack the Ripper, His Life and Crimes is a bit of a disappointment. Gary Conville and Patrick Luciano disapprove of many of the films made about the crimes, not for their inaccuracies, but because the films offend their delicate sensibilities! Yes, some of these films are quite misogynist in nature, but exactly what does one expect of a movie about the Ripper? Kudos to the authors for giving proper credit to Robert Bloch's stories for popularizing Saucy Jack, and for their discovery of several very obscure radio productions.

Jack the Ripper, A Bibliography and *The Jack the Ripper Handbook* both distinguish themselves by not trying to prove anything, instead listing the newspaper reports and sources for Ripper movies, books, stories, plays, and music. *Handbook* has the edge, due to its mentioning more obscure plays (including *THE JACK THE RIPPER REVIEW*, an excellent show) and —ahem— *Scarlet Street*.

Jack the Ripper: The Inquest is just that—the court reports into the murder of the final (or was she?) victim, Mary Kelly. Still, it's a bit of Ripper history that I have never seen in print before, and is to be recommended to any serious student of these ghastly crimes.

The True Face of Jack the Ripper —well, it isn't, as far as I'm concerned. Author Melvin Harris writes with a sort of "nyah, nyah, I'm right and you're wrong" attitude, which is annoyingly smug. He spends much time disproving other theories, most of which have already been disproved elsewhere. This is probably the least satisfying book of the bunch.

Prisoner 1167 is a remarkably well-researched book and an often wonderful read. Covering the facts of the crimes, it holds one's interest. Only when James Tully expounds his theory as to the identity of the infamous psychopath (the beginning and end sections of the book) does he ramble unconvincingly.

Finally, but certainly not least, *The Man Who Hunted Jack the Ripper* concerns the

police investigation of the crimes focusing on Edmund Reid, a decorated police officer involved in the search. Reid was an eccentric who died forgotten railing against the injustices of British transport and poor bridge construction. Kudos to Rupert Books, a company specializing in unusual and fascinating material relating to Sherlock Holmes and Victorian-era crime.

As for Jim Carrey, watch out! My book *Jim the Ripper* should be out soon.

—Kevin G. Shinnick

JAMES BOND: DID HE REALLY LIVE TWICE?

John Bryan
Domino Books, 1988
130 pages

James Bond: Did He Really Live Twice? makes the interesting point that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's

Sherlock Holmes stories were a major influence on Ian Fleming when he created James Bond—and puts forth the intriguing theory that Bond is, in fact, a latter-day version of Holmes.

The author of this slim volume, John Bryan, spends the majority of the book pointing out the similarities between Holmes and Bond, such as that both characters were offered knighthood by a grateful England, yet refused.

Both characters, according to Bryan, also faced the same sort of villains—men who were cultured, intelligent, and ambitious, often in charge of a large-scale criminal organization. Conan Doyle's Moriarty and Fleming's Blofeld easily come to mind. Another similarity is that Holmes and Bond would often engage in a one-on-one verbal duel of wits with their enemy.

Bryan addresses what appears to be the most glaring difference between the two characters: their relationships with women. Holmes would rather have nothing to do with women—while 007 can't get enough of them! In Bryan's view, Bond's reputation with women has been grossly exaggerated, mostly in the latter Bond films. On the other hand, Holmes' en-

Ernest Stavros Blofeld (Charles Gray) in 1971's **DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER** is to 007 what Professor James Moriarty is to Sherlock Holmes.



counter with Irene Adler—at least in Bryan's perception—shows that he was, indeed, capable of love.

One may see this as bending the facts to fit a particular point of view. But Bryan not only uses the literary works to back up his statements; he also calls to the reader's attention the Bond films, as well as the Basil Rathbone Sherlock Holmes movies, as evidence. This may be a controversial move, since some fans revile the films as being unfaithful to Conan Doyle's and Fleming's original visions. And if one chooses to use the Holmes films as Gospel, why stop at Rathbone? Why not address such worthy Holmes movies as *THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* (1970) or *MURDER BY DECREE* (1979), for instance?

Despite poor typesetting, *James Bond Did He Really Live Twice?* should satisfy diehard fans. But a word of warning: Do not read this book if you plan to read the original stories, Mr. Bryan, in his enthusiasm, reveals all.

—Sean Farrell

THE JEREMY BRETT-

LINDA PRITCHARD STORY

Linda Pritchard and Mary Ann Warner
Rupert Books, 1998

146 pages—£20

A STUDY IN CELLULOID

Michael Cox
Rupert Books, 1999

253 pages—£19

To many, he was Sherlock Holmes. To the people who knew him, he was a friend haunted by personal demons. Jeremy Brett and his best-loved characterization are examined from two different angles in these books.

The first book is by a woman who befriended the actor from 1988 to his death in 1995. Many people think she was an overzealous fan who latched onto a famous star and took advantage of his good nature and illness to insinuate herself into his life (*Shades of Groucho Marx and Erin Fleming*)! Reading the book, one gets a sense of mutual love and mutual need, but again this might possibly be no more than an illusion. The writing is often purple, reading like a true romance novel. Still, on the whole, it's a unique perspective on the man—not the actor. That, and the listing of Brett's acting, should make this book worthwhile for true fans.

Of considerably greater interest to Holmesians is Michael Cox's wonderful recollections of the Granada series in *A Study in Celluloid*. He, too, has a unique take on Jeremy Brett, as he was the original producer of the series. His opinions are honest and his insights into the making of the series make for marvelous reading. He looks objectively on the series, praising its many fine qualities—even for the episodes made after he departed the show—but never sparing what he considers its faults.

There will probably never be a better book on Granada's Sherlock Holmes series than this, so grab it before it becomes a collector's item.

Kevin G. Shinnick

THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X

Continued from page 52

kid to death, ain't it?" asks Pinky. "Yeah, he's the skunk who wanted to find out how long babies could go without eating," Garrett tells him.

Xavier's crime is obviously designed to be especially horrifying to the viewer—and it is until one pauses to wonder what possible scientific purpose such an experiment could serve? It's the sort of idea that makes Lugosi turning himself into an ape or Zucco creating an army of wolfmen seem pretty reasonable! Of course, the newspaper files lead exactly where we expect—to Xavier having been executed. "You mean to tell me you saw that guy walkin' around alive? Now, I know you're bats!" exclaims Pinky.

Rhodes isn't any less skeptical, insisting that the whole idea is absurd "unless the execution didn't take place."

"Oh, but it did. I phoned the warden and made sure. Dr. Flegg came out and claimed the body and the burial took place in Greenlawn Cemetery," Garrett reveals, and Rhodes agrees to go to the cemetery that night to investigate further.

One of the less successful aspects of Katz's script is the manner in which his characters—especially Rhodes—accept and agree to some pretty outrageous notions without a quiver, but balk at other no more bizarre notions without rhyme or reason. Much the same holds true with the visit to the cemetery, where Garrett simply knowing "the old caretaker" (Ian Wolfe) serves as a no-questions-asked entree to uprooting the late Dr. X! Ludicrous as this is and expected as the empty coffin is, the scene is still effectively creepy—with a nice touch when the caretaker takes a look at the unoccupied casket and decides, "I've been robbed!"

Even the stubborn Rhodes has to admit that there's reason enough to have another talk with Flegg, who, confronted with this evidence, decides to confess—complete with a demonstration! "You mean to tell us that you've discovered a way to bring a man back to life?" asks Garrett. Admitting that this is indeed the case, Flegg is rewarded by an utterly obligatory "It's incredible," from Rhodes, resulting in a fine mad scientist speech. "Is it? Remember a hundred years ago, anesthesia would have seemed equally incredible. Even 50 years back, the possibility of x-ray would have astounded the world. Twenty years ago would anyone have believed that the living, pulsing human heart could be held in the surgeon's hand, operated on, and for the patient to walk again?" "But to revive a dead man . . ." marvels Rhodes. "I don't believe it," puts in Garrett. "You've told no one about your visit to the cemetery?" asks Flegg. When they admit they haven't, Flegg invites them into his laboratory for the film's Big Scene. Unfortunately, the Big Scene isn't big enough to really pack much punch, despite the best efforts of John Litel, Vincent Sherman, and Bernard Kaun. It's efficient enough, but one really expects something a little more elaborate than seeing Bogie's bunny being brought back to life. That's really all the scene consists of, with some high-falutin' pseudo-scientific dialogue that threatens to turn the otherwise fascinating Flegg into a maniacal Mr. Wizard. However, the subsequent expository scene makes up for it.

Having completed his demonstration, Flegg explains about reviving Xavier. "True, in the eyes of society, he was a

murderer. He was also a medical genius and I felt he had been a martyr to science," explains Flegg—without, of course, explaining the genius required to starve an infant to death. "Was that the only reason?" prods Garrett. "No, not quite. In addition to the experiments of the type you've just seen, I needed him for . . . further research," Flegg confesses. To some degree, Flegg's subsequent explanation—incomplete though it seems—clarifies the curious relationship between Flegg and Quesne. (Certainly nothing in the way Flegg treats Quesne suggests even the nominal degree of respect one might reasonably expect for a "medical genius" and a "martyr to science!") "Rhodes, surely you can understand after we've recreated life, the second and greater problem is to sustain it. In order to do that we must be able to give the person a new bloodstream. For six years in that laboratory, I've been striving to create a usable, workable synthetic blood." "Synthetic blood? That's the blood I

found in Merrova's body that artificial quality was your synthetic blood," Rhodes realizes, in a line of dialogue that suggests post production cutting, since at no point in the film does he examine Merrova's blood! "But why did she die if you've created a synthetic blood?" "But I haven't, Rhodes. It's true that my formula will sustain life for a short period, but unlike human blood, it fails to recreate itself. Somehow, somewhere the magic element of life has eluded me." "How is it that Quesne manages to keep alive?" asks Garrett, answering his own question when Flegg balks. "I'll tell you how—by killing for human blood." "Yes," admits Flegg, "but he had to. He warned me, told me he was dying, begged me to help him, but I refused. Then I realized that my work had ended not in failure, but in disaster. Angela Merrova had been murdered.

Quesne saw her here in my office and knew that she was number one blood type—the type he needed. She was his first victim. When I discovered what had happened, I brought her back to life, but I knew it was only for a short period—her death was inevitable." Flegg admits to having wanted to tell the police, but he held off, hoping to find the secret and give the discovery to the world. "But that's all over now. Quesne will continue to kill until he's destroyed. My experiments have turned into madness. I've created a monster. May God forgive me."

Unfortunately for Flegg, Quesne has been listening at the window with mounting horror as his secret has been revealed. He corners his onetime benefactor as soon as Garrett and Rhodes leave. "Flegg, you told them about me." "Yes. In a few minutes, the police will be looking all over the city for you. You might as well give yourself up." "No, you gave me this life and I'm going to keep it as long as I can. I want that list of blood donors—the addresses in that book of yours." When Flegg refuses, the expected happens and Quesne shoots the doctor, who at least stays conscious long enough to warn Rhodes that Quesne has the list of donors. And this is where the film makes its ill-advised move toward an action-oriented climax . . .

The moment Quesne starts packing a rod and sets out to kidnap Joan, the proceedings become perfunctory and mechanical. The one intriguing aspect of this stems from Quesne's attitude toward Joan, which again hints at something subtextural. Where he was suave and cunning with Rhodes, Quesne treats Rhodes' girlfriend in a manner that's openly contemptuous, as if he can't be bothered with



Warner Bros. did its best to give Humphrey Bogart something other than a mobster to play in *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* (1939), but he wound up packing heat anyway.

subtlety where a woman is concerned. Otherwise, the scene is unremarkable, and the fact that the chase through town is obviously composed of footage from another film doesn't help matters. (Nor does the fact that Quesne's peculiarly accommodating taxi—does the cabbie not wonder in the least what's going on?—has magically transformed into an entirely different make and model by the time it reaches Xavier's old hideout in New Jersey.) The scenes in the hideout are certainly creepy enough ("I wouldn't scream no one can hear you"), but by the time the good guys arrive and Quesne is shot on the roof while blasting away at the cops, Bogart might as well be Duke Mantee after all. The only saving grace here is Quesne's dying line, "Tell Dr. Rhodes we'll have to postpone our talk on blood composition," which one final time suggests a strange fixation on the young doctor.

Is *THE RETURN OF DOCTOR X* an unheralded horror classic? No, far from it. The film has too many problems to ever make that grade, but it's also a much better work than is casually assumed. The film boasts an often clever script, some stylish direction, a dynamite musical score, an exceptional performance from John Litel, and at least three-quarters of a classic horror star turn from Humphrey Bogart. Bogie may have bristled at the role and he mightn't have taken too kindly to the idea in general, but when all is said and done his performance here suggests the unthinkable—that, had he wanted to, Bogart could probably have become an iconic horror figure.

SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

Continued from page 61

particularly Diana Rigg's presence as Tracy Draco (aka Mrs. James Bond). A welcome added attraction on the disc is the 11-minute featurette *INSIDE Q'S LAB*, a fun and fitting tribute to the late Desmond Llewelyn.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN (1974) is another entry that's perhaps unfairly maligned. As portrayed by Roger Moore in his second appearance, 007 (and viewers) must contend with beautiful but irritating assistant Mary Goodnight (Britt Ekland) and unintelligible evil henchman Knick Knack (Herve Villechaize). The disc's excellent behind-the-scenes documentary makes one newly appreciate this film, which certainly isn't short on action and exotic locations. No added information is necessary to appreciate Christopher Lee, who's superb as Scaramanga, the triple-nippled villain of the title. This disc also includes *DOUBLE-O STUNTS*, an entertaining overview of Bond stuntmen and their best work in the series.

The very next Bond film, *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME* (1977), broke *THUNDERBALL*'s box office record to become

the most popular 007 adventure ever. Usually cited as the most entertaining of the Moore Bonds, *SPY* spectacularly returns to the 007-versus-megalomaniacal-villain-in-outlandish-lair formula. The arguable charms of po-faced leading lady Barbara Bach as Major Anya Amasova and Richard Kiel as steel-toothed assassin Jaws notwithstanding, *SPY* is among the series' best. And stay tuned for *DESIGNING BOND*, a look at Ken Adam's impressive sets for *SPY* and many others.

Featured on the *MOONRAKER* (1979) disc is a nicely-produced, 42-minute "making-of" documentary, and an entertaining 20-minute featurette on Bond special effects, featuring interviews with the late John Stears and others. Also included on the disc is the 126 minute *MOONRAKER* feature film.

The slipcase for *THE JAMES BOND COLLECTION: VOLUME TWO* contains the five discs detailed above, with room for a sixth. *THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH* (1999), available separately, can fit right in with its comrades. This third and latest Brosnan Bond features plenty of explosive action and excellent performances by Robert Carlyle as villain Victor Zokas and Dame Judi Dench (in her third and seemingly final appearance as M). This special edition includes a neat feature whereby viewers can access storyboards of key action scenes by activating on-screen icons.

In addition to the customary extras such as preview trailers, TV and radio promos, and music videos (where available), all these discs contain a full-length audio commentary track featuring the film's director, and most contain a second track with comments by other cast and crew members. The discs also feature elaborately animated menus specific to each film, with gorgeous graphics and clever dialogue clips. They add to the fun of these wonderfully assembled collections. Congratulations to MGM for this all time high in James Bond video releases.

So close the blast shutters on your stainless steel subterranean rec room, shake (don't stir) a vodka martini or two, and give these discs a spin.

Volume One (\$199.95)

GOLDFINGER, *THUNDERBALL*, *LIVE AND LET DIE*, *FOR YOUR EYES ONLY*, *LICENCE TO KILL*, *GOLDEN EYE*, *TOMORROW NEVER DIES*

Volume Two (\$149.98)

DR. NO, *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*, *THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN*, *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*, *MOONRAKER*



LEFT: Miss Moneypenny (Lois Maxwell) and James Bond (Sean Connery) indulge themselves in some of the usual bickering, much to the displeasure of M (Bernard Lee). RIGHT: Oddjob (Harold Sakata), the steel-hat-tossing henchman of *GOLDFINGER* (1964), proved to be one of the Bond series' most memorable villains.



RODNEY GIBBONS

Continued from page 40

other than the Barrymores. It's hard to consider that Franklin could be responsible, and certainly not Dr. Mortimer—so who's left? We tried hard to bolster the Barrymores, and then what we did instead of was to try to dispel the suspicions around Stapleton. For example, there's the scene where Sir Henry meets Beryl after Beryl has tried to warn him, and Stapleton comes up and throws a major tantrum and gets all upset and Watson witnesses it. That scene was a red flag, so we took it out. The confrontation takes place only right at the end, and so Stapleton is no longer a crazy, emotional type; he's a cool, calm, pleasant, affable man.

SS: Was there any concern about casting an American as Holmes?

RG: Matt's Canadian!

SS: Well, he was born in Washington and raised in Canada

RG: Oh, man, I've gotta get this story straight. I've have to check that, because we made the joke during the shoot that, in this film, everybody who's supposed to be British is Canadian and the one guy who's supposed to be Canadian is an American. That was the joke of the film, the irony of it all.

SS: What's your own favorite moment in your production of *THE HOUND*?

RG: Definitely my favorite moment is the first scene with Holmes and Watson, when Holmes asks Watson for his interpretation of what the inscription on the cane means. Watson gives his interpretation and Holmes says, "Very good, Watson!" Watson says, "Well, I do try and apply your methods, Holmes," and Holmes says, "Yes, but not without very much success so far, I'm afraid." Watson says, "What, you mean I've done something wrong?" and Holmes replies, "Not something, nearly everything!" Then Holmes proceeds to explain the real meaning of the inscription and Watson slowly becomes crestfallen. Watson says, "Well, Holmes, I would have never gained such knowledge from this stick." Holmes says, "Of course not, Watson, but some people without possessing genius have the ability to inspire it in others." Watson says, "Thank you, that's very comforting." It's such a beautiful moment, and it's really pure, pure, pure Kenneth. Everybody always gets a chuckle just watching Kenneth's face drop.

SS: You cut Dr. Mortimer's dog from that sequence. In the original, there are a dog's teeth marks on the cane

RG: We cut Dr. Mortimer's dog because, again, we only had 22 days to shoot and every time you introduce an animal you're compounding the difficulty factor. We thought about having it, but some things have to go and Dr. Mortimer's dog was one of them. It would have meant that we'd have had to have it at the Northumberland Hotel, in the carriage driving to Baskerville Hall, in the sequence at the Hall where they meet Barrymore—this dog would have been driving us crazy! (Laughs)

SS: You're set to direct *THE SIGN OF FOUR* this fall, too, and the *Odyssey* network has indicated that at least two more programs are being considered. Does this mean that a full series is being projected?

RG: We're doing *THE SIGN*, now; in fact, I was just reading the script when you called. Then there's the possibility of two others and maybe more. I just keep hearing the whispers in the wind, but I'm glad to be doing one more, that's for sure!

SS: Was the script for *THE SIGN* also written by Joe Weisenthal?

RG: Yes. I'm just reading his first draft right now. Tougher one to do, in a way. There's a lot of exposition, because there's a lot of storytelling within the story. It's better to show than to tell, otherwise it gets very static and very expositional. It's better to show action, so we're going to have to come up with a couple of devices. We can always use flashbacks, which is a tried and true device, but we have to find ways of telling the story without just telling it. Joe came up with a nice one for the opening. It's a nice teaser, about the servant taking the jewels to the fort and meeting Small and the other three soldiers, and getting killed when they steal his treasure. It's a very nice opening! But then there's other stuff, a lot of exposition, and who likes to sit and listen to an explanation when you can watch it unfold?



Were there ever better neighbors than Jack Stapleton (Robin Wilcox) and Sir Henry Baskerville (Jason London)? Depends on who lived next door to Jack the Ripper, Dr. Crippen, Leopold and Lulu . . .

acter, a horse that's been ridden by a lot of jockeys

SS: We have one last question. You've played both *Max Headroom* and *Alexander Haig*. Any similarities?

MF: (Laughs) That's a good question! Yeah, I think the sly and sometimes not so secretive desire for world domination. That's where they're similar.

VINCENT SHERMAN

Continued from page 59

the Guild when he was playing leads. I'm still friendly with his daughter

SS: Ann Sheridan was known as the "oomph girl." Wasn't she one of your favorites?

VS: Yes. I did two pictures with Annie. The first time I met Annie was when I did some retakes on a picture she did with Ronald Reagan called *JKU GIRL*. She was out of favor at the studio and not working when I bought a story called "The Man Who Died Twice" for \$2,500, thinking it would make a pretty good movie. Well, Jack Warner came up to me in the dining room and said, "What's this story I hear you bought?" I said, "It's just a little story. One day I'll make it as an independent." "Well, tell me what it is." So I told him about it. He said, "Could you make that something for Ann Sheridan?" I told him it was really a man's story. He said, "Well, couldn't you make it her story? If you can and she'll do it, we'll buy it and you can make it as your next picture." That turned out to be *NORA PRENTISS*, a pretty good film noir. A lot of people liked it and it was successful. She was a wonderful girl to work with, and a better actress than most people thought. In fact, Annie was a very good comedienne. All you have to do is look at her in *I WAS A MALE WAR BRIDE*. My God, she was great in that! She could do anything! She was a regular gal—down to earth, no bullshit, no affectations; she was like Ava Gardner in that sense. They were both country girls who made it, never expecting to be big stars.

SS: Didn't Jerry Wald want you to direct *Ann Sheridan* in a film version of the James Cain novel *Serenade*?

VS: Yes, he told me that he had persuaded Jack Warner to buy it, and would

MATT FREWER

Continued from page 45

a big deal about it that, of course, it becomes a big deal! (Laughs)

SS: Exactly! Did you enjoy your role on *SCI-FACTOR*?

MF: Yeah, I did. I did two years, and I was actually a producer on it as well. Eventually we parted company, they could no longer afford to hang on to me, so it happens to producers, too! (Laughs) It was an interesting sci-fi show. In the early stages, I actually turned it down about three times and then they started sending me sample scenes of what they would do with the character. I read it and said, "God, this is really good!" At a certain point you just gotta roll the dice, and I thought, "Well, why not?"

SS: In *LAWNMOWER MAN 2*, you actually say Sherlock Holmes' famous line, "The game's afoot!"

MF: Yeah, an actor with no feet! There I was, playing a wheelchair-bound guy, and in *MAX HEADROOM* I had no legs—this is a theme for me!

SS: Do find it daunting to play a role previously played by someone else? Not just Holmes, but Job in *LAWNMOWER MAN 2*?

MF: In *LAWNMOWER MAN*, I didn't even think about it, really. As Holmes, there's a certain awareness. It's like playing Hamlet, it's a very well-known char-

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soon have a screenplay ready. I said, "Isn't that the one about a young singer who becomes intimate with his manager, a older homosexual man, and loses the masculinity of his voice? Then he runs off to Mexico, where he meets a hooker who restores his manhood?" Jerry wanted Dennis Morgan to play the singer and Sheridan as the hooker. This was 1946, and I reminded him that we couldn't even suggest homosexuality in a picture, let alone use it as the basis for a story. SS: *How did Wald hope to get away with it?* VS: He said, "Don't worry about it. We're changing the manager, the old fag, to a woman!" I said, "So what does one woman do for him that robs him of his masculinity and the other do to restore it?" He said, "You'll see. I have a good writer working on the screenplay." He wanted me to get a copy of the novel, then go to Mexico to scout locations. When I got back, he said, he'd have a completed screenplay. Well, I quickly read the novel and it confirmed what I'd heard about it. I saw no way that the writer could solve the problem. I asked again to see the screenplay, but Jerry pleaded with

me to find the locations and trust him with the rest.

SS: *He was sinking a lot of money into an impossible movie, wasn't he?*

VS: Jerry had a theory about the studio—get them to spend enough money on a project and they wouldn't abandon it. When I got back from Mexico, Jerry had the screenplay, which was nicely written but unclear about the cause of the singer's breakdown. Thinking it over, I decided I'd have to refuse it. The worst that could happen would be a suspension for eight or 10 weeks. But I had an idea. I told Jerry that he already had the first draft of a screenplay that would make a good movie, and that I could do it with Sheridan. Jerry wanted to know what screenplay. I told him *THE UNFAITHFUL*.

SS: *That was a reworking of the Bette Davis film, THE LETTER*

VS: Jerry was more or less agreeable to the idea of a different film, and we went to see Warner in his private projection room. I had a suspicion that Warner didn't really know what *Serenade* was about, so I explained why making it would be a mistake for the studio to make it. I started to sum up the novel, I got to the point where the hooker killed the homosexual, and Warner shouted, "Wait a minute! What the fuck kind of story is that?"

SS: *So you made THE UNFAITHFUL?*

VS: We jotted down Sheridan for the Bette Davis role, Zachary Scott as her husband, Lew Ayres as her attorney, and we added Eve Arden as a wisecracking friend.

SS: *Eve Arden was in GOODBYE MY FANCY, too. Was she as funny offscreen as on?*

VS: Eve Arden was a very intelligent, wonderful actress! A wonderful gal! If you didn't give her a quip, she would make something up! She had a way about her. When you needed somebody to give you some humor, you got Eve Arden.

SS: *You were only a few years older than Errol Flynn, but he called you Uncle Vinnie.*

VS: He would sometimes call me "chum" and "old pal." He was a charming guy but a complicated character, one of the most complex men I've ever met. He was not the playboy that magazines made him out to be; he was full of contradic-

tions. He made fun of acting, as though it was nothing. But what he really wanted was to be considered a good actor.

SS: *You suggest in your book that Flynn actually hated women. Not that this naturally follows, but do you think there's any truth to the stories that he had an affair with another male star, namely Tyrone Power?*

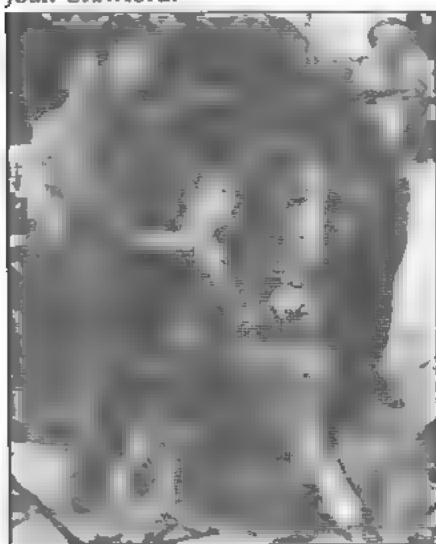
VS: I think that, if he did, it was because he was ready to try anything once. In the *Don Juan* character, there's an incipient homosexuality, but he was certainly not a committed homosexual.

SS: *You directed HARRIET CRAIG, THE DAMNED DON'T CRY, and GOODBYE MY FANCY, all with Joan Crawford.*

VS: *THE DAMNED DON'T CRY* is the best, because it gives you an overall picture of Crawford that's very different. She plays the poor, hard-working wife in the beginning, the wealthy mistress later. But she's very effective in *HARRIET CRAIG*, a remake of *CRAIG'S WIFE*. I didn't want to do it. It was my first loan-out. They sent the script to Crawford, and she asked if I'd like to do it with her. I told her, "No way! And you shouldn't do it either. It's just a remake of an old picture." And she turned it down. Then I found out that Warner had already made a deal to loan me out to Columbia to do the picture with Margaret Sullavan! When Crawford found out, she said, "You're a fine one! You tell me not to do the picture, then you turn around and *you do it!*" I told her I had nothing to do with it, and I was ready to break my contract. But we finally did it, and I did the best I could, and she did a hell of a good job!

SS: *In Studio Affairs, you said the character of Harriet Craig was similar to Crawford's own personality.*

VS: Yes, but she didn't even know what I was doing. She never once questioned; she never said, "Are you making fun of me?" I had a feeling everyone who knew her, knew that I was using things about her! Maybe she knew, maybe she didn't—I never asked her. But she was that way about her house—about everything. Then I went back to Warner's to do *GOODBYE MY FANCY*, which should have been a



Vincent Sherman on the set of HARRIET CRAIG (1950), with its star, Joan Crawford.

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VINCENT SHERMAN

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more successful picture, but I think the casting was wrong. The newspaper guy was played by Frank Lovejoy, who was a good actor and a friend of mine, but there was no chemistry between him and Crawford. I just did not believe they had ever been in love with each other, and I don't think the audience accepted Crawford as a congresswoman. It was not strong enough as a comedy, nor strong enough as a drama.

SS: *Was Joan Crawford a good actress?*

VS: Yes, she was a very good actress. She worked hard, and we had a wonderful relationship. I talked to her on the phone not too long before she died. She sent me a photograph in the mail, inscribed, "To Vincent—with constant love," which I treasure.

SS: *Did your personal relationships with Crawford, Davis, and Hayworth make it easier or more difficult for you to direct them?*

VS: It made it easier with Crawford. With Davis, on *OLD ACQUAINTANCE*, it was a dream. Everything I suggested, she said "Oh, that's a great idea!"—but nothing personal had happened at that point. It wasn't until I drove her home after *OLD ACQUAINTANCE* that she told me she loved me. She wanted me to go to Mexico with her, but she was married and I was married. Her husband came to talk to me and asked me not to go—and I didn't go. It was later that her husband died in Hollywood. After that, on *MR. SKEFFINGTON*, she was very difficult. Every time I suggested something, it was, "Why this? Why that?"

SS: *You worked with Virginia Mayo*

VS: She was very pleasant, very pretty. Had a lot of talent. She got better the more we rehearsed. But I didn't want to

do *BACKFIRE*. She was a very nice woman, though. I saw her recently and I like her a lot.

SS: *Are there any actors you didn't work with that you're sorry you missed?*

VS: I would have loved to work with Audrey Hepburn, Katharine Hepburn. I'd love to have worked with Brando. Eddie Robinson was a wonderful actor. He never won an Academy Award, but he was a great actor. James Mason was a great actor.

SS: *So many of your films still aren't available on video.*

VS: Well, they're all black and white. They're very slow in doing reproductions of black and white films. That's the way Hollywood is—you ask the average man on the street, he's never heard of Michael Curtiz. Warner Brothers never publicized their directors. You know why? Because they'd ask for more money! The stars—they had to publicize them, because that's what sold the pictures. Now they realize that advertising the director helps sell the picture, but not in those days. Ask the average man—he doesn't know who directed *GONE WITH THE WIND*. The only directors whose names were recognized by the public . . . first was D.W. Griffith, who was the father of all the directors. Then came C.B. DeMille. Then came Frank Capra. Then came Hitchcock and John Ford. But the average person doesn't know William Wyler or Lubitsch or Victor Fleming, and only recently is George Cukor known.

SS: *And then there's James Whale, the subject of GODS AND MONSTERS.*

VS: I thought it was good! I think the young boy, Brendan Fraser, was very good. He'll be a big star, because he's a very good actor. And that was not a very easy role to play. He was wonderful in *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*. He's a great

actor, a very handsome boy. He'll be able to do anything that Errol Flynn ever did.

SS: *In 1980, you directed the television biopic BOGIE*

VS: I hated it. I didn't hate the script, but the casting was all wrong. The guy who played the part was a good actor, but he didn't begin to approach the personality of Bogart. I got stuck with that picture because I knew Bogart. The script was done by a very good writer, but I told my agent it depends on who plays Bogart. He told me they were trying to get John Cassavetes, and I thought he'd be good. I went into that picture thinking they had Cassavetes, but they couldn't even get him on the phone! Finally, I called him and he explained to me that he couldn't do it because he promised Lauren Bacall that he wouldn't if he was asked. And I understood that.

SS: *Do you have any new projects?*

VS: Well, I've been working on two scripts. Both great stories—funny, powerful. And I read every night for about two hours. That keeps me pretty busy.

SS: *Did you ever want to cast yourself in one of your films? Did you ever feel like you could play the scene better?*

VS: No, not really. The truth is—I went through every part, you know what I mean? You put yourself emotionally into those things.

SS: *Did being an actor and writer first make you a better director?*

VS: Oh, yes! No question about it! That's one of the advantages that a director has who has been in writing and acting—you know what the actor is going through. You have to search for the thing that opens up that part of their personality. You can't just walk right in and hit it right away. Sometimes you fumble around, sometimes you get it just right . . .

DARK PASSAGES

Continued from page 71

more than showing, and by setting this darkest of plots on wholesomely sunny beaches and scenic coastal highways, and in well-lit, well-domesticated rooms. Tay Garnett directed the Harry Ruskin and Niven Busch screenplay.

John Garfield gives a fine performance as Frank Chambers, an itinerant laborer. Hitchhiking through the beach side orange groves of southern California, Frank finds work as a handyman at the Twin Oaks, a gas station and hash house. The owner, Nick Smith (played with charm by Cecil Kellaway), a gentle soul who drinks too much, is besotted with his gorgeous, much younger wife, Cora ("sweater girl" Lana Turner, in one of her best roles). Platinum blonde Cora, unlike most femme fatales, almost always wears white, as if she wants her virginity back.

Nick naively trusts Cora, though he knows she married him for security, not love. She now sees him as a boring old man. She resents how he's let the property deteriorate because he's too stingy to spend money to make money. Cora and Frank begin with an approach-avoidance dance, but lust and obsession soon overcome their feeble commitment to orthodox morality. With veiled eroticism, director Garnett insinuates that Cora and Frank do lots more than swim and sunbathe.

The perverse pleasure of this film comes from watching the adulterers mess up their scheme to put Nick out of their way. As lovers, they're each other's worst enemies. They

both suffer repeated pangs of conscience, alternating with simple fear of getting caught; yet every time one of them tries to back out, the other argues successfully in favor of going ahead. First, they try to electrocute Nick in his bath, with a Rube Goldberg device that kills a curious cat and attracts the attention of the intelligent District Attorney, Kyle Sackett (Leon Ames). This foul-up shocks Cora and Frank into a major attack of common sense, but they overcome it. Frank leaves town, then returns, unable to renounce Cora. When they load a drunken Nick into a car and sail him off a cliff to his death, they make mistakes, as usual. The D.A. swiftly recognizes that this is no accident.

A defense attorney, Arthur Keats (Hume Cronyn), cleverly manipulates the suspects, the D.A., and the legal technicalities, until Cora can plead guilty to manslaughter and get off with probation, while all charges against Frank are dropped. The pretrial wrangling has turned the couple's love to loathing, yet they marry, to maintain a hold on each other while passing for a respectable couple. Cora spruces up the Twin Oaks into an attractive, prosperous business. They fend off a blackmail attempt by a Keats employee, then reconcile, and use a dangerous swimming feat as a ceremony to prove their renewed love and trust. Still, with their unerring instinct for self-destruction, they won't enjoy their ill-gotten gains for long. The POSTMAN rings their bell again, with a surprise package of ironic retribution.

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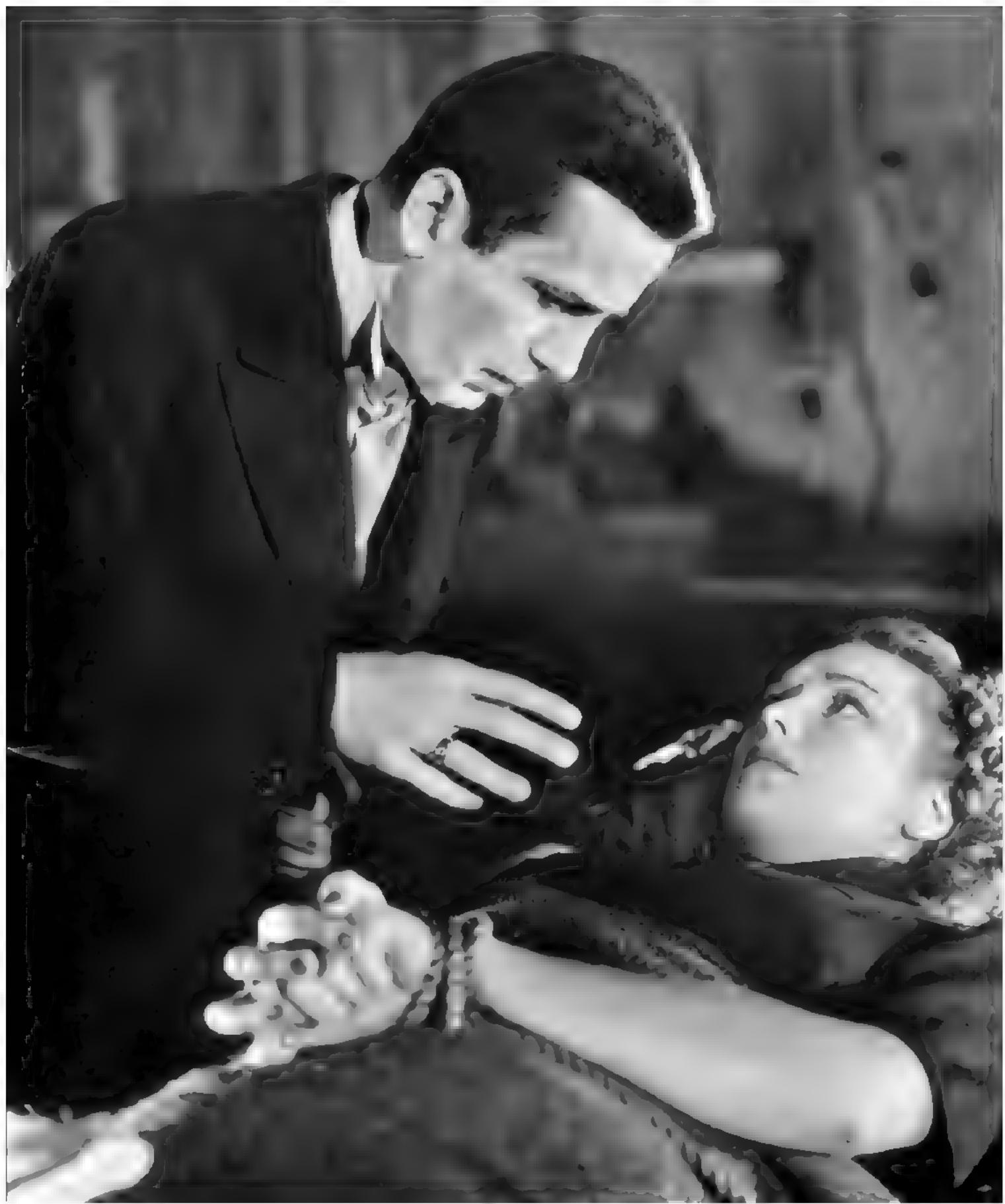














































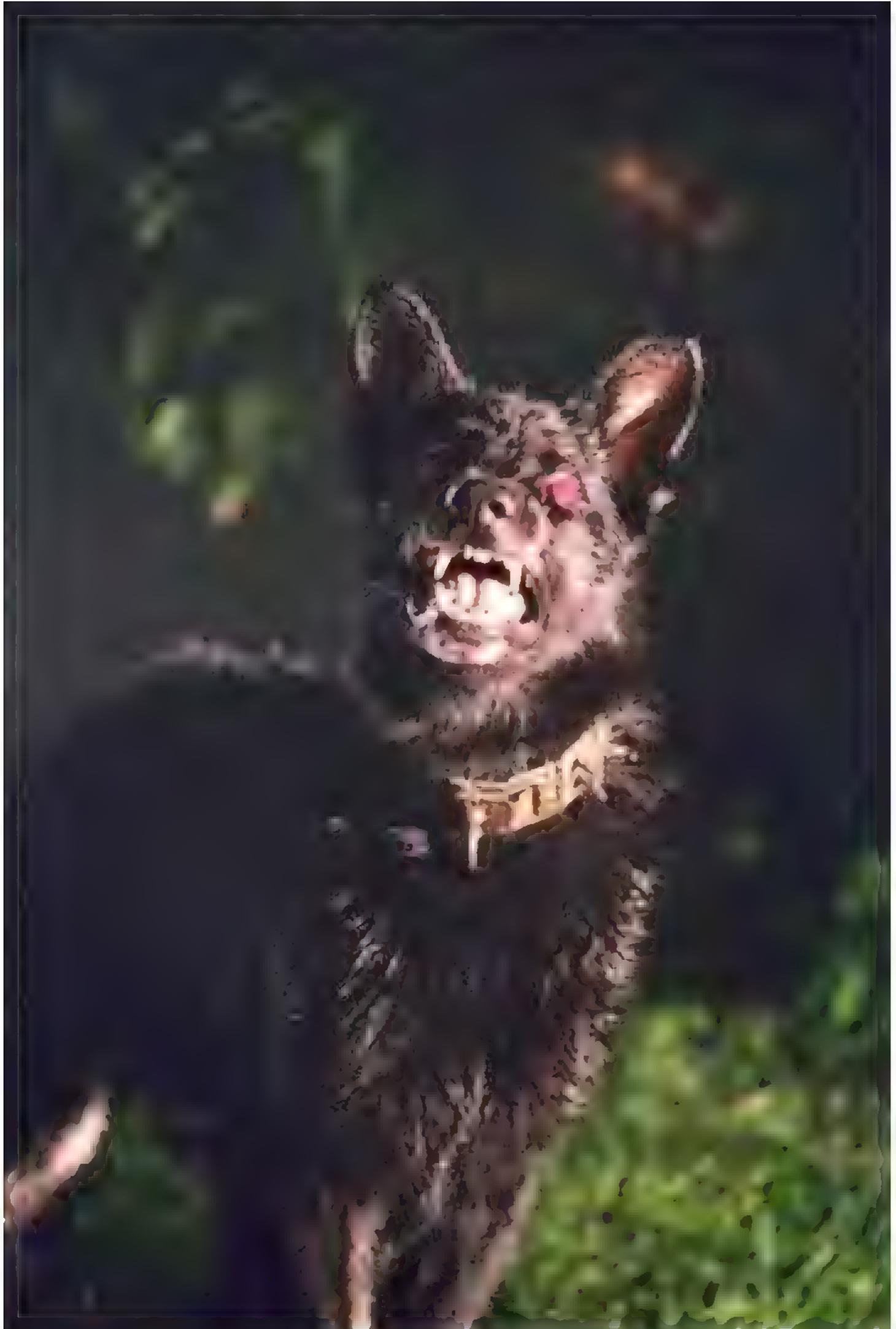












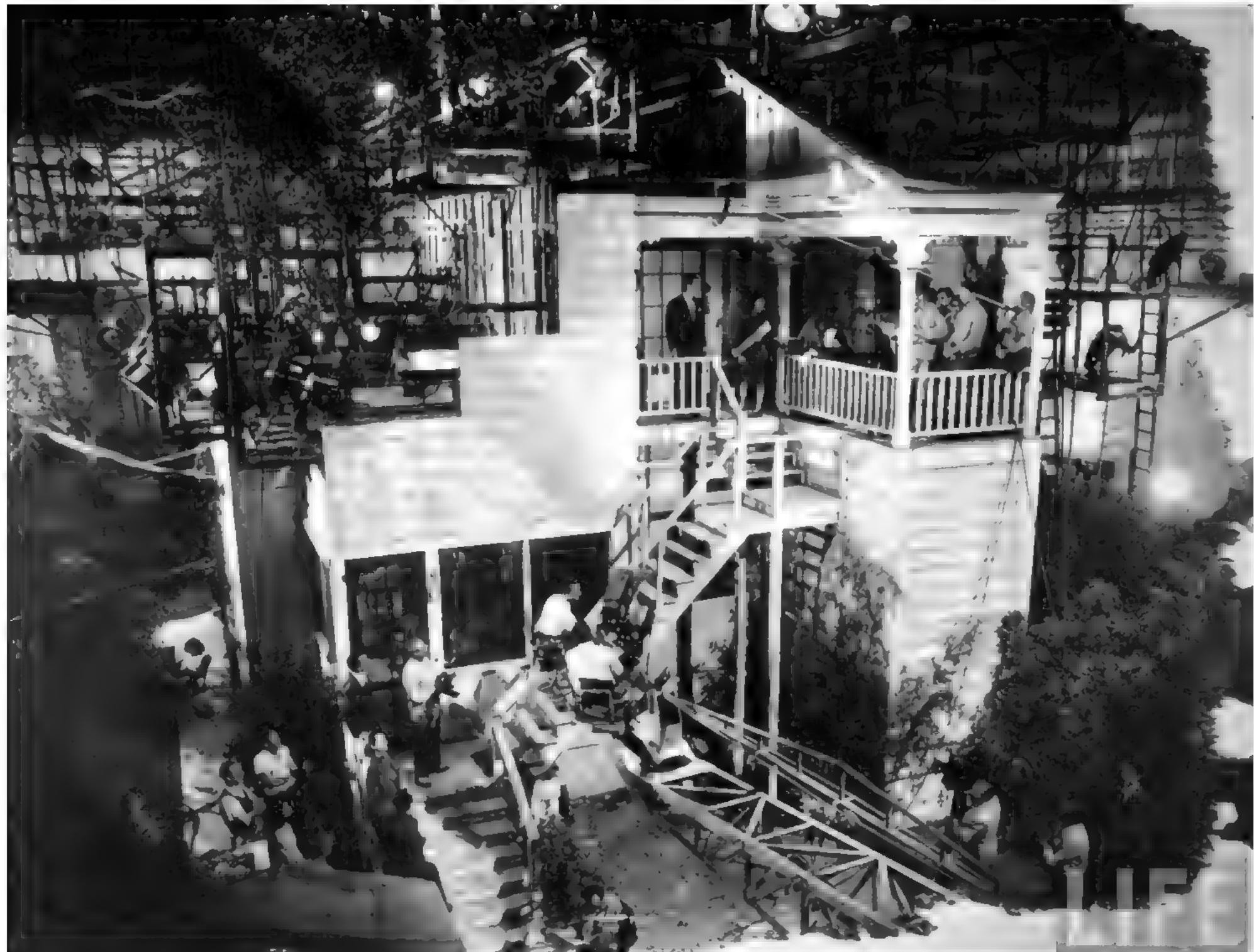








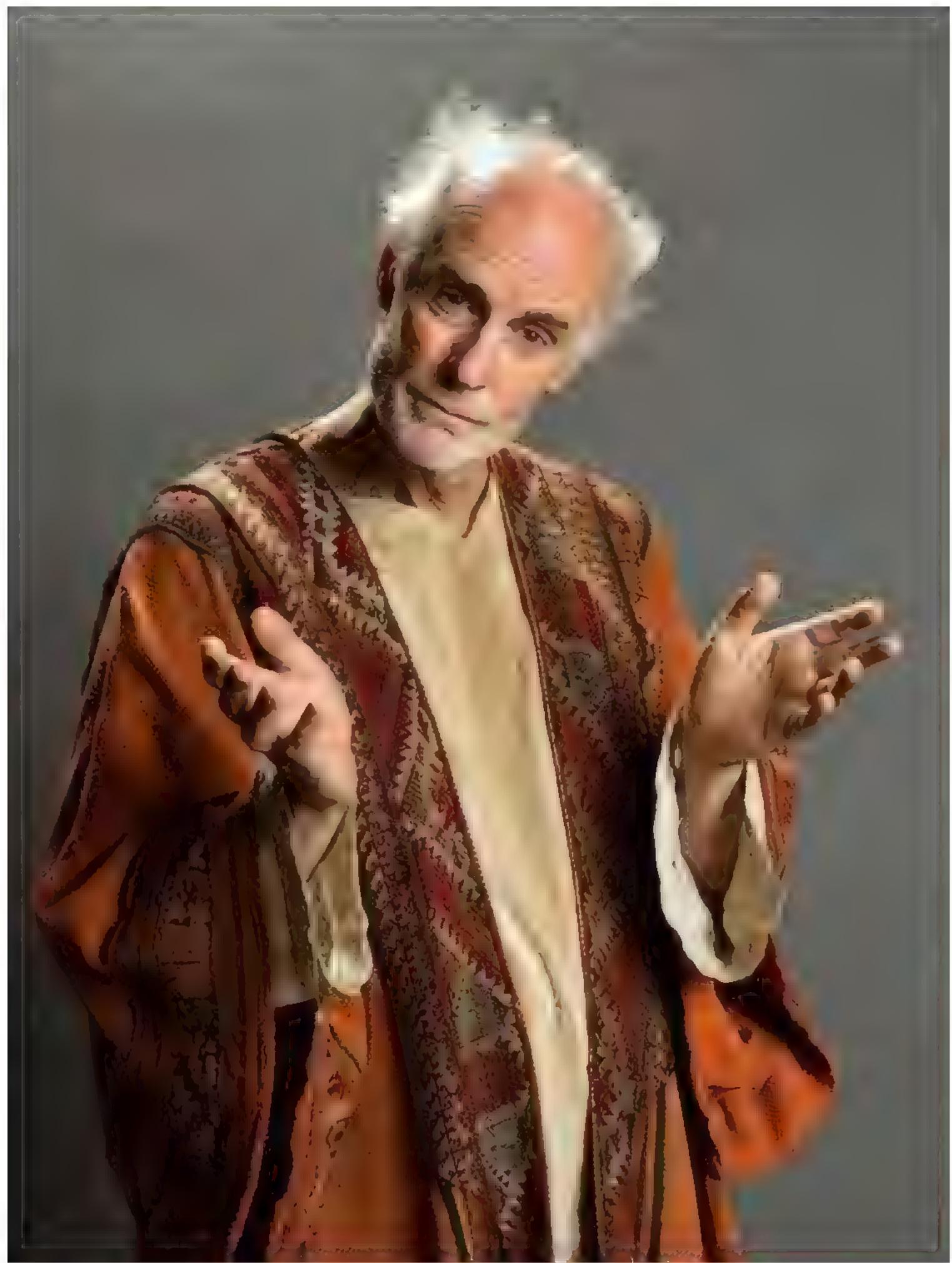








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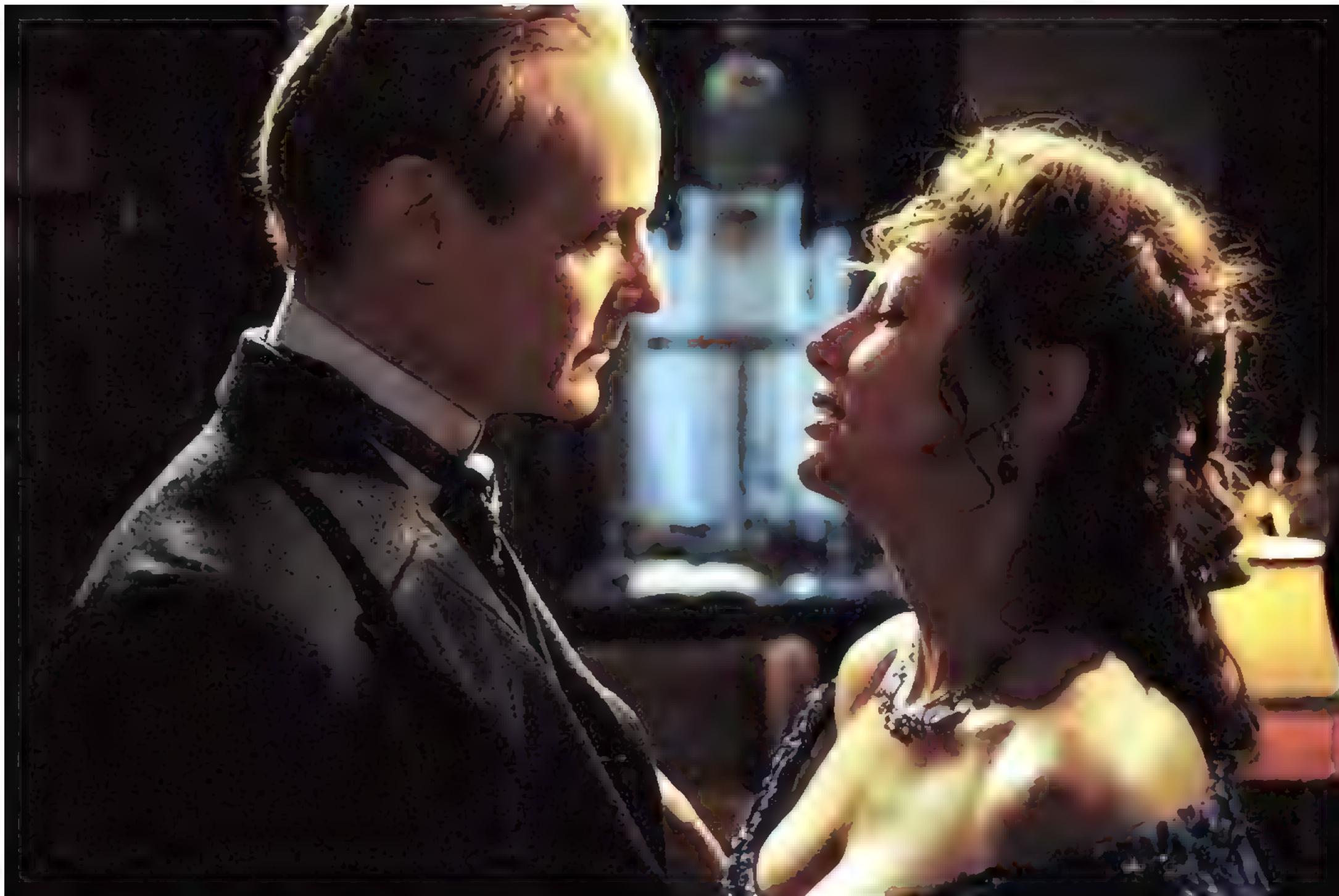
























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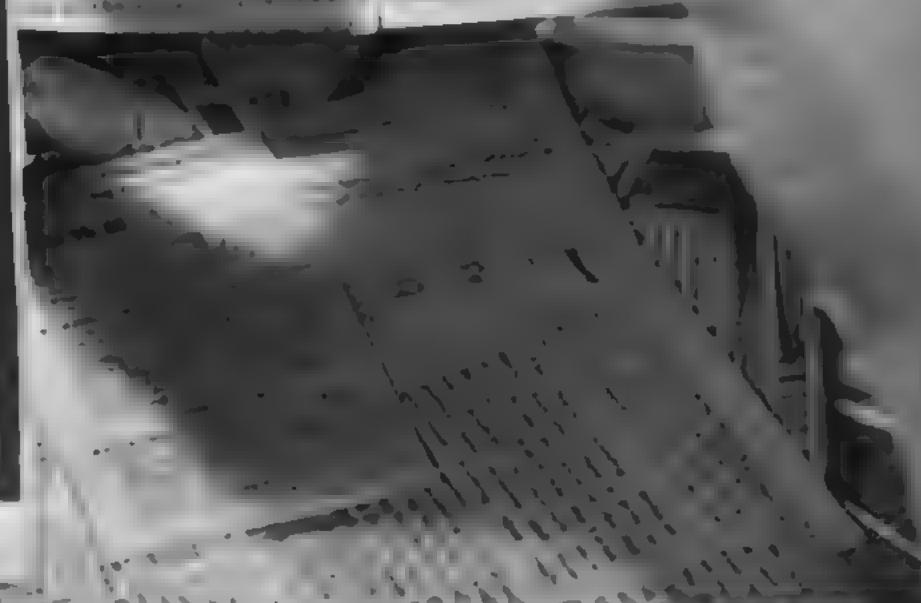


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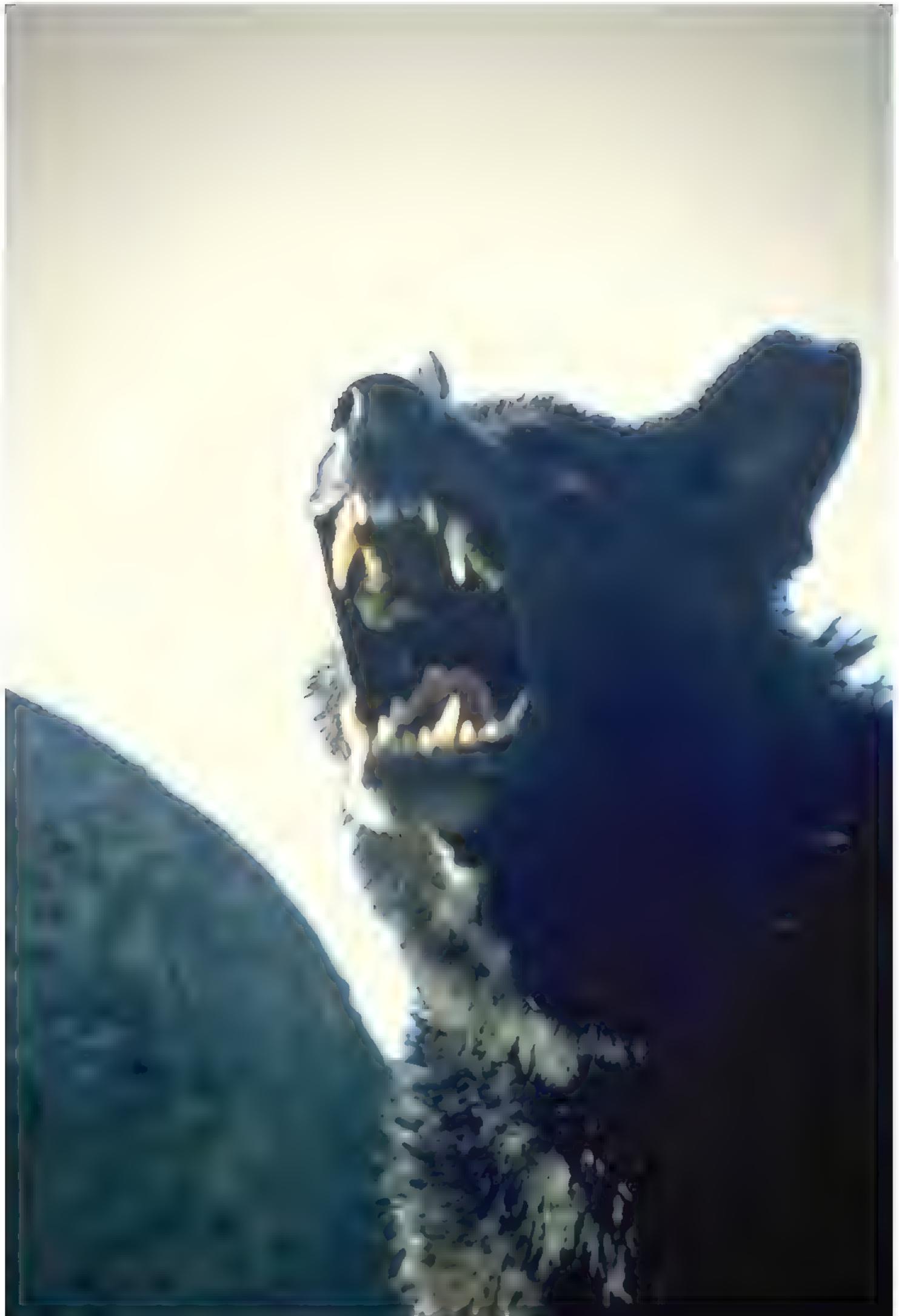


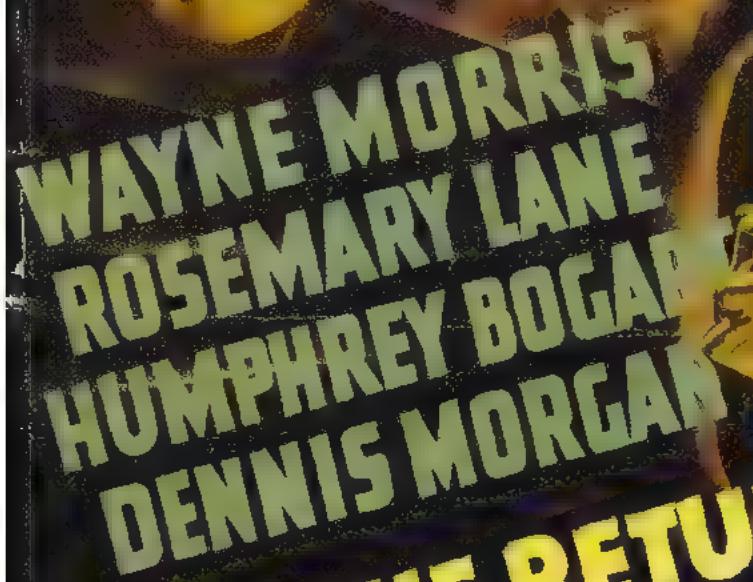












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